

PLUCK AND LUCK

STORIES OF ADVENTURE.

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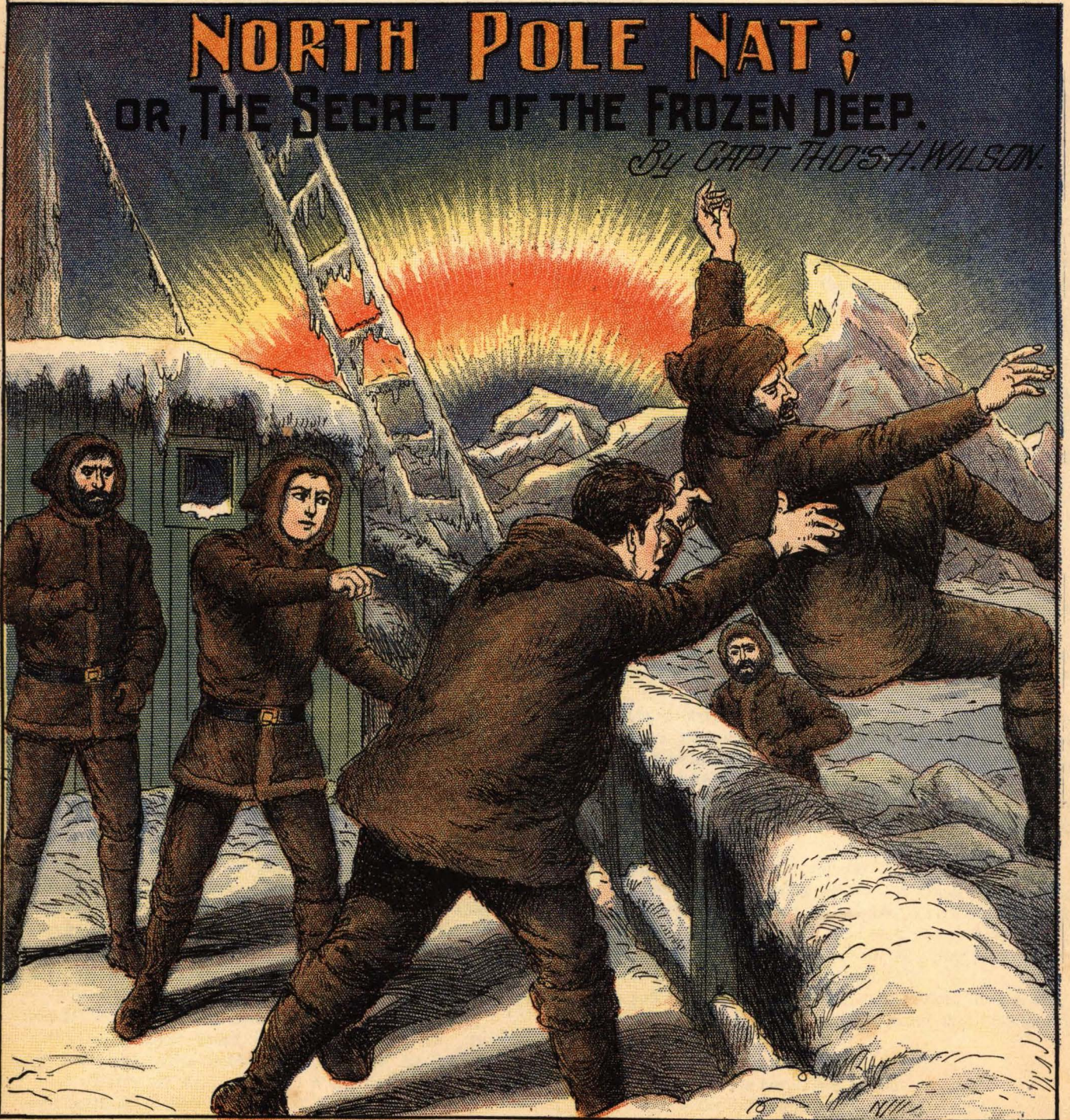
No. 484.

NEW YORK, SEPTEMBER 11, 1907.

Price 5 Cents.

NORTH POLE NAT; OR, THE SECRET OF THE FROZEN DEEP.

By CAPT THOMAS WILSON.



Chucks, seizing him around the waist, as though he were an infant, carried him up on deck, and treated him as his comrade had been served a moment before. "There, now," grunted the rotund oarsman. "You're not going to fool Mr. Chucks."

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NORTH POLE NAT

OR,

The Secret of the Frozen Deep

BY CAPTAIN THOS. H. WILSON.

CHAPTER I.

THE WHALER.

"There she blows!"

The cry came from the masthead of an American whaling bark, cruising in the Arctic Ocean, late in September of the year 1869, in latitude 79 degrees and 26 minutes N., longitude 71 degrees and 22 minutes W., or about the middle of Smith's Sound.

The bark was the Arctic Fox, James Hathaway, master, of New York, and had remained rather late in the season, owing to Captain Hathaway's desire to make a good catch.

Many of the crew had demurred to this, being afraid of having to remain in the ice during the long Arctic winter, which is invariably severe.

The captain was determined, however, and there was no disputing him when he made up his mind to anything.

Had he listened to reason he would still be alive and well, in all probability, and his crew would have been spared a vast deal of privation and death.

In that event, however, this story might never have been written, or the strange events which it depicts, never have happened.

To return to the bark, however, and the seamen aboard of her.

At the well-known hail, one which the men had been anxiously waiting to hear for many days, every sailor, awake or asleep, sprang to his feet.

Every whaler knows the magic there is in that sound, changing idle, listless beings into nervous, excited creatures, every fiber of their systems throbbing with enthusiasm, every sense alert, every muscle strained to its utmost.

"Where away?" sang out the captain, in a ringing voice which could be heard in every part of the ship.

"Almost straight ahead, sir."

"Who's that up aloft?" asked the mate, Mr. Cartwright.

"Job Hawkins, sir," answered a lad of about twenty, tall, well-built, and muscular.

This was Nathan Hawkins, commonly called Nat, the hero of our story.

"If Job Hawkins says he sees anything, you can rely upon it," said the mate. "He has the sharpest eyes in the whole fleet, and a better harpooner never lived."

"How far off are they, Job?" called out the captain.

"About six miles, sir."

"Regular Greenlanders, are they?"

"Ay, ay, sir! I don't see but one of 'em, but he's big. Got two spouts to him as thick as my arm, travelin' putty fast, too. There he blows ag'in, sir."

"We'll have him, if there is only one," murmured the captain. "He'll make over a hundred barrels, more'n likely, to say nothing of the bone."

Nat scrambled in the forerigging in order to get a good sight of the monster, just as the captain called out again:

"Sure there's only one, Job?"

"That's all, sir."

"There she blows!" yelled Nat, on the instant; "there's two of them."

"Hallo, North Pole Nat has got something to say about it," muttered Mr. Cartwright. "He's foreved sticking in his oar."

Nat was forever talking about the North Pole, his father having been lost on an exploring expedition there, and Cartwright had nicknamed him North Pole Nat, the title sticking to him, as such things will.

As Nat sang out, the sailors looked aloft, and one or two of them laughed, though these were not the friends of the young fellow.

A handsome cabin-boy, probably about sixteen years of age, and looking remarkably effeminate for a youth, though he was as bright and smart as any boy, gazed with admiring looks at Nat, perched up aloft, and said in a low tone:

"He may have as good eyes as you, Mr. Mate, and know as much, for all your poking fun at him."

"Can you make out two of them, Job?" asked the captain.

"Yes, sir, I can now. Nat was right about that. T'other one has just come up."

"Do you see more than two, Nat?"

"No, sir, and mine is not as big as Job's."

"They're heading for the drift in, sir," shouted Job, from his exalted perch in the crow's nest, as the lookout is called upon a whaler.

"Come down from aloft; shipkeeper, get your signals ready, clear away the boats there, get in your line tubs."

Job and Nat ran down the rigging like monkeys, the sailors hurried to and fro, and a scene of great excitement and bustle ensued.

The boat-steerers, or harpooners, looked after their "craft," as the harpoons, lances, and other implements used against whales are called, the tub-oarsmen put the tubs containing the lines into the boats amidships, while others cleared the falls from the davits, so as to be ready to hoist the boats from the cranes when the proper order should be given.

In southern latitudes it is customary for whalemens to divest themselves of all superfluous clothing when getting ready to chase whales, but here the case was quite different.

The weather was cold and piercing, the men at the wheel and aloft having to protect their hands with fur mittens, and everybody aboard was dressed in furs, fitting quite tight, so as to allow free play of the muscles.

The time when whalers usually returned had long passed, and the quantity of drift ice to be met with was something alarming, an occasional iceberg being also seen in the distance.

Even now, the spray dashed up by the cutwater of the Arctic Fox was frozen as it fell on the bowsprit, stays, and lower guys, and the martingale was one mass of ice.

The wind whistled through the rigging and cut like a knife if one exposed his face to it for any length of time, and the only way to keep warm was by constant exertion.

The days were already beginning to grow very short, and before another month would cease altogether.

No wonder then that the men grumbled; and they were ripe for mutiny, which was only quelled by the firmness of the captain.

Mr. Cartwright and Mr. Jones, the first and second mates, were among the malcontents, and nearly half the seamen were under their control, Job Hawkins and Nat remaining true to the captain.

"When we get this fellow boiled down," muttered the mate to his fellow conspirator, "we start for home, or I must know the reason why; you don't catch me staying here any longer."

"Why not refuse to go after him at all?"

"No, no, that won't do; we must seem to obey, but——"

The sentence was completed in the man's ear, and no one else heard it.

"All right, then, that will do first-rate."

"All ready there?" sang out the captain.

"Ay, ay, sir."

"I'm going to take my bomb-gun, Joe," said the master. "Don't lower away till I come back," diving into his cabin as he spoke.

A bomb-gun is a very large bore weapon, used for shooting the bomb lances into a whale's side, the barrel being more than an inch in diameter, inside measurement.

The bombs are sharp and winged like an arrow, and when they pierce any substance a hammer is tripped which explodes a cartridge, and gives the huge cetaceans a bad and generally fatal wound.

Captain Hathaway soon returned with his gun and a box of bombs, nearly a foot in length, which he deposited in the stern sheets.

"Hoist and swing," was the order; the boats were lifted from the cranes, the latter swung inboard, and the men at the falls stood ready for the next order.

"Lanier!"

The ropes flew through the blocks, the men scrambled into the boats, each in his place, the oars were run out and away pulled the sailors, many looking upon the Arctic Fox for the last time.

CHAPTER II.

AN EXCITING CHASE.

The whaling bark carried four boats, manned respectively by the captain and three mates, each officer having a harpooner and four seamen, making six men to a boat.

Aboard the vessel were the shipkeeper and his crew, consisting of the cook, steward, carpenter, cooper, blacksmith, and one or two extra hands.

The shipkeeper signaled to the boats the movements of the whales, whether they were up or down, which way they went, whether they had disappeared for good, when to return to the ship, and everything else that was necessary to know.

He commanded the vessel in the captain's absence, and the men under him were obliged to obey him in all particulars, as though he had been the captain himself.

The boats went dancing over the waves, their sails set and the men pulling besides, while the signal flag, flying aloft, indicated that the whales were still in sight, and unmindful of the presence of enemies.

The cook was at the wheel, and kept the vessel's head as it had been, for that told which direction the cetaceans were taking, and saved the boat headers much trouble, as often the sea ran so high that things near at hand are hidden, and therefore a glance backward at the vessel is the easiest way to tell what is going on.

The two whales were seemingly unconscious of the approach of their enemies, and were blowing and playing in the water, lashing the icy waves into foam, and leaving a greasy wake, or "sleek," as sailors call it, behind them.

The wind blew fresh and strong, and after a while the men unshipped their oars, so as to make as little noise as possible.

The shipkeeper, Ed Lewis, by name, a raw-boned, big-chested Nantucket man, had, in his hurry, left his glass below, and looking down he called out:

"Below there! Tell Frank to bring up my glass."

"He isn't here, sir," answered the carpenter.

"Where is he?"

"Gone in the old man's boat, I reckon."

"Are you sure?"

"Yes, sir. If he was here we'd seen him before this, for he's a lively lad."

"Confound the young scamp!" muttered the man to himself. "Why the blazes couldn't he stay aboard, I'd like to know?"

Frank Trafton, the cabin-boy already alluded to, had indeed gone after the whales, taking a seat by the side of the captain, and occasionally assisting him in steering, for the harpooner never goes aft until after the whale has been struck, his superior doing the killing, and he the steering after that.

Frank was a general favorite on board, and upon that account the captain had made no objection when he found the lad at his side, but merely smiled, and patted his curly head.

In the captain's boat, besides himself and Frank, were Job Hawkins, who pulled the harpooner's oar; Ned Evans, stroke; Jim Brown, tub; a rotund specimen of humanity called Chucks, 'midship; and a brawny Yankee by the name of Sol Sampson, bow.

The boat was ahead of the three others, the mate's boat coming next in order, and every man was in a fever of excitement, which increased as the distance between them and the whales momentarily lessened.

The latter were keeping a pretty steady course, but not being aware of the approach of the boats, did not go as fast as the latter, so that the captain gained upon them every minute.

It was a pretty even thing, however, for the boats were still three or four miles behind, and no one could tell at what

moment the whales might become frightened, "galled," the sailors called it, and either go down, or start off at such a rate that it would be hard to follow them.

The men sat idly upon the thwarts, talking in low tones, the captain steering, and Frank tending the sheet of the sail, easing off occasionally, and then drawing it a little flatter as the breeze freshened.

Two hours passed, and the boats were still a mile or so behind, at least the captain's boat was, the others having fallen considerably to the rear.

The distance lessened, and presently the captain ordered the men to take in sail, unstep the mast, and get out their paddles, which made less noise than oars.

The orders were obeyed, and soon the paddles were dipped deep and with an even stroke in the water, the boat gliding over the sea at a fair rate of speed.

By some mischance, Chucks struck the shaft of his paddle against the gunwale and made considerable noise, which the whales heard, gifted as they are with an acute sense of hearing.

They took the alarm immediately and were off like a shot, going right away from their pursuers.

"Get out oars, bullies," said the captain; "pull away, my tars. Now, then! Give 'em a good, long, steady stroke, Nat, and we'll overhaul these greasers yet."

The men pulled with a will, and at the end of another hour the whales seemed to have recovered from their fright, and were not going as fast as before.

"I'm glad they didn't sound, anyhow," said the captain, "for there's no knowing where they might not have come up, or whether they would do so at all."

"The bark don't seem to keep up with us, as well as she did," said Frank. "She's fallen behind considerable."

"So she has," replied the captain, glancing back over his shoulder. "Never mind, she'll have a chance when we get fast to this fellow."

Half an hour later, the boat had drawn so near that Job took in his oar, stood up, and got his harpoon ready.

"Pull easy, my boys," whispered the captain; "steady and easy, and don't make any more noise than you can help."

"Put me off a bit, sir," said Job, putting his knee in the chock and poising his weapon. "I want to hit him abaft the hump, and I'm a little afraid of his flukes."

The whale was an immense fellow, being over one hundred feet in length, and of a dark gray, mottled with brown, promising from his looks to yield a good supply of oil and bone.

He had every appearance, too, of being a troublesome fellow, and without doubt would give the whalers a hard job to subdue him.

His monstrous flukes beat the water and churned it up every now and then, the twin columns of vapor and water shooting up every now and then from the spout holes, as he would sink a few feet and then arise, a decidedly "fishy" odor being perceptible, although, properly speaking, a whale is not a fish, but a marine animal.

The captain put the boat off a little so as to allow it to pass the flukes or tail of the monster, and then when about midway of the creature's length, headed directly toward him.

Job now poised his harpoon, braced himself firmly, took a good aim, and calculating the distance carefully, made a good three-fathom dart, driving the harpoon deep into the monster's side, just back of the hump, the best place in the world for it.

"Stern, stern!" yelled the captain, thinking that the whale would turn upon him.

The men backed water, and the line ran out as the whale dashed ahead, lashing his flukes, and uttering a kind of snort as he felt the sharp barbs of the harpoon piercing his sides.

The thrust had been a good one, and a stream of blood dyed

the water crimson, but in spite of this, the animal kept on increasing his speed as he went along.

The smaller whale had sounded when the bigger one was struck, and at that time was nowhere to be seen.

"Pull ahead, bullies!" said the captain, taking a turn around the loggerhead with the line, so as not to let it run out too fast.

"Shouldn't wonder if I could give him another dart, sir," spoke up Job. "He's a big fellow, and the fust iron might pull out."

"All right, Job; get your other harpoon ready, and I'll put you on him in a minute. Pull ahead, bullies! How do you like this kind of sport, Frank?" turning to the lad at his side.

"First-rate, sir; it's very exciting, and I shouldn't wonder if it was dangerous as well."

"You're right there, my lad; it is dangerous sometimes, and no mistake. Keep a good stroke, Nat, and never mind the whale. He can't hurt us, for we're out o' the way of his flukes."

"Put me a little nearer now, sir, and I'll sock it to him again," remarked Job, poising his second harpoon, there being three in the boat.

"All right," answers Captain Hathaway; and as Job comes within good distance once more, the slack of the line having been taken around the loggerhead, he makes a second dart, sending the harpoon further forward than the first, but in a good place, nevertheless.

The whale makes a bound as the second iron enters, and the line plays out rapidly, the captain not caring to get a slap of those flukes, which would stave his boat to bits in a moment.

As the whale did not sound, the captain took a turn around the bit again, and let the greasy fellow tow him, the man having already shipped their oars, the speed being too fast to make them of any use.

"Light your pipes, boys," said the captain, jocosely. "We'll let this fellow tire himself out, and then we'll run up and lance him. I'll signal the other boat to come down."

Little did he expect that he would never see them again, or that his life-current had nearly run out.

CHAPTER III.

AN UNEXPECTED CATASTROPHE.

Affairs now became more exciting than ever, for the boat was being towed through the seething waters at a rate of not less than seven knots, the sea bubbling all around them, and a gleaming wake trailing out behind.

Then, too, the drift ice became thicker, and it was a matter of considerable skill to steer clear of some of the larger masses, a contact with which would have been the destruction of the boat.

The captain had brought his glass with him, and after being towed for fully half an hour, he got it out from beneath the stern sheets, and gazed long and earnestly ahead of him.

"I don't like the looks of that ice," he muttered; "it seems to be packing in towards shore, and right across the channel, too. It's likely that it'll do the same behind us as well."

Frank Trafton, who had turned around and was looking astern of him, suddenly cried out at this juncture in startling tones:

"I can't see the boats anywhere, sir, for the life of me. Nor the ship, either," he added in the next breath.

The captain turned about and swept the horizon with his glass.

"My God! She is nowhere to be seen!" he gasped. "Do you see this fog is settling down all around us? It hides her from sight."

"Taint' a fog at all," mutters Job, still seated forward, "but a regular cloud-bank; and if it don't mean snow, and lots of it, then I'm mistaken."

"Is he going fast, Job?" asked the captain.

"Ay, ay, sir, every bit; no, he's slackin' up some; guess we can haul in upon him."

"Take in slack, boys; lively now," orders the captain, and the tub-oarsman coils it down in the tub as it come in, length by length.

The boat drew up considerably upon the monster, and Captain Hathaway determined to try and kill him at once.

They had now been out for at least six hours, and night was not more than an hour distant. With the increased darkness around them, it might be less time than that before they would be unable to see anything.

"Come aft, Job, and I'll see if I can stop his nonsense."

Job went aft and took the steering oar, while the captain, armed with a long and exceedingly sharp lance made of the finest steel, took his place in the bow.

The men dipped their oars and pulled lustily, the captain being alongside in a few minutes, his arm raised for the blow.

Deep into the animal's side he plunged the lance, pulling it out and thrusting it in again and again, finally churning the whale with it, and causing the blood to gush out in a crimson stream.

The animal, although mortally wounded, made a dive for the boat, and the men were obliged to back water immediately.

The line slackened, and the captain got his foot in a bight of it uninvitingly.

The whale suddenly changed his tactics, the line tightened, and ran out rapidly, the loop about the captain's leg drawing up in an instant, and before he could cry out or release himself, he was dragged overboard into the boiling sea.

Job uttered a cry of horror, and seizing the hatchet, which is always ready for such emergencies, cut the line.

He was too late, however, for the unfortunate skipper had been drawn down beneath the surface, and was nowhere to be seen.

He did not come up again, and in all probability he had been rendered unconscious by the fierce rush of waters, and no doubt dead long before that time.

"There goes the whale," said Nat, "blowing like fury. I guess he don't feel sorry, for a cent."

"We must pick up the captain," said Job, "and then go back to the ship. Blamed lucky if we don't get caught in a plaguey snow squall afore we git back," he muttered in a half audible aside.

They waited around the spot for nearly an hour, and saw no trace of the captain, finally coming to the conclusion that he had not been disentangled from the rope, and that in all likelihood the whale was still towing him through the water, as probable a conclusion as any they could arrive at.

"Then we'd better go back," remarked Job, when this conclusion was reached.

"Easier said than done, my brave man! There is no going back now, no matter how hard you try!"

As he spoke there came a sharp blast which cut to the bone, and in an instant the huge snowflakes were whirling around them in a blinding mass.

Job, turning to shield himself, slipped, and fell into the bottom of the boat, losing his hold upon the steering oar, which floated away out of sight in an instant.

The storm was so fierce that the men could not see where

they were going, or even to pull their oars, the only thing to be done being to sit still until it subsided.

The captain's great coat was under the stern thwart, and Nat got it out and made Frank wrap himself in it, for the boy, more delicate than the rest, was beginning to feel the cold and shivered like a leaf.

"I'll be blamed if this ain't too pesky for anythin'," growled Job. "Bet a coat the current's taking us north as fast as it can go. It's all on account of you, Nat, an' we're bound to reach the North Pole sure now."

The snow fell as thickly as ever, and continued to do so for an hour, by which time it was quite dark, the snow still falling, though not so fast as before.

"We might as well have a light, anyhow," was the sudden remark of Job, nobody having a word to say for ten minutes. "Get out the lantern, Nat."

Every whale-boat carries, when in pursuit of whales, a boat lantern, which is put in a keg made expressly for it, and Nat got this out, and, shielding it from the wind, struck a light and ignited the wick.

The lantern was then put in the line-tub, the attempts to step the mast and hoist it to the top thereof having been abandoned after two or three trials.

"There's no use trying to get home to-night," muttered Job (every sailor speaks of his ship as "home") "and I don't see why we can't be comfortable. We've got some grub, so let's eat it, and then talk about something else."

Before starting out the men had put in a keg of fresh water, another of hardtack, and a considerable quantity of pemmican, or pressed meat, the latter being used a great deal by the Arctic sailors, from its combining the greatest quantity of nutriment in the smallest bulk.

The crew at once followed Job's suggestion, and made a hearty meal, after which the harpooner and Chucks lit their pipes (no whaleman is ever without his pipe and tobacco) and enjoyed the luxury of a smoke.

"Won't you have a whiff, Frank?" asked Job, with a laugh.

"No, I thank you."

"Perhaps you'd like a chew? I can accommodate you with either."

"Not to-night, Job," answered Frank, from the shaggy depths of the captain's greatcoat.

"You'll never make a man if you don't use tobacco," laughed Job.

"I'll never be any more a man than I am now, I guess, tobacco or no tobacco. Wonder if I'd better go to sleep."

"Do you feel cold?" asked Nat.

"Not a bit."

"Nor drowsy, either?"

"No; but I suppose we shall be here all night, and that's why I spoke of going to sleep."

"You're all right," answered Job, with a snort. "You don't know why North Pole Nat asked you those two questions, do you?"

"For information, I presume."

"Exactly, and if your information had been different he wouldn't let you go to sleep for a fortune."

"Why not?"

"'Cause if you had, you'd be frozen to death afore mornin', just as sure as my name is Job Hawkins."

"Frozen to death!" exclaimed Frank, in surprise.

"Yes," answered Nat. "There's no danger now, however, and if you like, you can roll yourself up in your big coat, cover your face, and drop off to sleep, and the thicker the snow falls on you the warmer you'll be. Keep the snow off your face, that's all, and you're safe enough."

"I shouldn't wonder if Jim Brown and Sol had already gone to sleep," said Frank, ten minutes or so later, the snow still

falling steadily, the cold increasing considerably, notwithstanding, "for I haven't heard anything of them for half an hour."

"Pass me the lantern," said Job, without further comment, and Frank did as requested.

The harpooner held the light close to the faces of the two men, and gave a grunt of surprise.

"H'm, they're asleep, sure enough, but it's a sleep they won't wake from in this world."

"What do you mean?" said Frank, springing up.

Nat understood Job's meaning only too well.

"He means," said he, "that the men have been frozen to death."

CHAPTER IV.

A FLOAT ON THE ICE.

"Frozen to death!" repeated Frank. "Right before our very eyes!"

"Yes, my lad, right here in the midst of us. I never expected such a thing would happen to Jim Brown or Sol either, 'cause both of 'em's been here before and knows the ropes."

"But I don't feel very cold."

"That's 'cause you've got on the old man's coat, and 'cause you're young and full of vitality. These fellows were older and half pickled with rum."

"I ain't any chicken, Mister Job," said Chucks, "an' I ben't cold."

"You? Why, bless your old rosy chops, you're too fat to freeze. If we run out of grub, we can boil you down and live on the oil for a month."

There was a laugh at this remark, but Nat said, gravely:

"Don't, Job; the matter is too serious to jest about. Men have been compelled before now to live upon their fellow beings, but I trust that we shall never be reduced to such straits."

"I was only joking, Master Nat, and I didn't mean anything. I'd be the last one to resort to such a means of keeping alive."

"I believe you would, but doesn't it strike you that the snow is letting up somewhat?"

"It is indeed," interrupted Chucks, "but the cold isn't. Golly, what's that cracking sound?"

The ice is forming around us, that's what it means." This from Job, who instantly seized upon an oar and worked it vigorously, about in the icy water.

"Suppose we all take our oars and pull," said Nat, suiting the action to the word, the rest, Frank included, following his example.

Nothing could be seen, so dark was the night, but they all pulled with a will, and kept the ice from gathering too thickly around them, the exertion arousing their pulses and making them glow with the heat still within their bodies.

The snow presently ceased to fall, except very gently, but the wind increased in sharpness and made their faces tingle, so that they were obliged to rub them occasionally to prevent their noses and cheeks from freezing.

Their fur suits were provided with hoods, which they could draw up over the tops of their heads down to their eyebrows and button up around their chins, a small portion only of their faces being left uncovered.

They had all protected themselves in this way, their hands being encased in heavy fur mittens which, while they allowed only a certain degree of freedom, protected them from cold most effectually.

The lantern gave them some light, to be sure, but not enough to enable them to distinguish objects at a distance, and this was quite necessary, considering the fact that they were speeding along very rapidly.

Several times Frank, who now sat in the stern sheets, Nat

having insisted that he should do no more rowing, warned them against blocks of falling ice, to strike upon which would have caused them serious injury.

Keeping a good lookout, he gave orders to pull, now this way, now that, and many times averted a catastrophe by his watchfulness, the others, sitting with their backs turned to the bow, being unable to see their danger.

The boat was provided with a rudder, which could be unshipped when not wanted, and this was now hung Frank holding the tiller ropes and guiding the boat aright.

Another hour passed, and now the ice began to form so thickly that the men's exertions were tiresome in the extreme, and the perspiration stood out upon their foreheads in great beads.

The oar blades were double their normal size with ice, and the shafts bent under its weight, making it necessary for Frank to take the hatchet and knock it off every few minutes.

The rudder, too, being slight, became clogged before long, and upon Frank's giving it a quicker motion than ordinary, on account of a large mass of ice against which they were drifting, it broke in two and was rendered utterly useless.

"Wonder how long the night lasts up here?" said Chucks. "Seems to me it never ends."

"In less than three weeks it will set in to last three months," remarked Nat, "but at this time we have several hours of daylight, though the farther North we go the less there is, until we get away up to the Pole, and there, I suppose, it's all night one half the year and all day the other, though I don't know exactly."

"Who do you suppose is going up there to find out?" asked the rotund Chucks, with a grin.

"I am, if I can ever get there."

"Look out!" shouted Frank, suddenly, in great alarm. "We are drifting into something."

Nat turned his head and saw a great white mass towering above his head, and extending directly across their path for many yards.

He was about to sheer off when the boat suddenly glided up several feet upon this object, and then struck with a sharp, grating sound.

"We've struck on an iceberg!"

"The boat is stove to bits!"

"The water is rushing in like a mill-stream!"

These cries were uttered almost simultaneously, and all four of the occupants made a hasty scramble upon the iceberg, the boat, though badly shattered, remaining fast.

When safely landed they hauled the boat up still further and began to look around.

About the outer edges of the berg was a sort of level path many feet in width, while in the center it arose to a considerable height and was of most fantastic shape, looking like a huge nightcap, with a peaked and tasseled top.

"Tain't a nightcap," remarked Chucks; "it's an extinguisher, and it's put us out already."

"Yes, out on the ice," responded Job, quickly. "This is a pretty how-do-you-do."

"Jim Brown and Sol have been washed overboard," said Nat, suddenly. "The tub-line is all right, though, and the other harpoon."

"Then I'm going for that," said Job, "for there's no knowing when we may need it."

He secured his harpoon, together with the warp attached to it, and a couple of fathoms of line, and thus provided he was ready for anything.

Chucks got the bomb-gun and box of bombs, depositing them upon the ice, while Nat and Frank were provided respectively with the spyglass and hatchet, all having sheath-knives, of course.

As the boat was so badly smashed that it would be of no further use for navigation, everything in it was removed and landed on the ice-floe, which was broken up, and the fragments piled together, to be used as firewood whenever they should need it.

The mast, sail, and oars—there being only three good ones, however, the others having been broken—were put aside carefully, as there was no telling when they might be needed.

"We are drifting rapidly," said Nat, after all these preparations had been made, and he had a chance to look about him.

"Well, being on an iceberg isn't as good as sailing in a boat," rejoined Job; "but it's a blamed sight better than getting chucked into the icy water around us."

"I'm getting cold," said Frank; "this wind cuts like a knife; can't we rig up some shelter or other? There's the sail—that'll keep it off."

Nat and Job acted upon this suggestion at once, and cutting holes in the ice, they planted a couple of oars firmly, wedging them in with loose blocks, and spreading the sail between them.

This kept the wind off most effectually, and Frank had no more cause for complaint, but sitting on the line-tub, chatted merrily with the others.

None of them dared to go to sleep, and as it was necessary to keep up a certain amount of exertion, they amused themselves by walking up and down and lashing their sides with their arms, not because they were cold, but to keep up a good circulation.

At length, as all things have an end, the morning dawned, suddenly, as it always does in high latitudes, and the party was able to get a better look of their surroundings than they had previously done.

The berg seemed to be several hundred feet in extent, and about five hundred feet above the water at its extreme height.

All hands set out to walk around it, and they had gone about a hundred yards, when, as they turned a sharp corner, Job uttered an exclamation of surprise, and pointed ahead of them.

They all looked, and saw two immense Polar bears glaring savagely at them!

CHAPTER V.

A CURIOUS DISCOVERY.

"Hello! We've got company with us!" said Job, upon seeing the bears; "and they're the first comers, I suppose, and think they've got the best right to the place."

"We'll see about that," answered Chucks, who had brought his big-bore fowling piece with him. "I shouldn't mind a nice fat Polar-bear steak for breakfast a cent's worth."

"What are you going to do?" asked Job, quickly.

"Plug that barefooted cuss that's grinning at me, right through the palpitator!"

"The what?" asked Nat, with a laugh.

"The heart, to be sure."

"Why do you call him barefooted?" asked Frank.

"Because being a bear, and having feet, he must naturally be bearfooted."

"And that's the most barefaced attempt at a poor joke that I ever heard in my life," rejoined Nat, laughing heartily, as the round, rosy Chucks waddled toward the two animals, still standing there and glaring defiantly upon the little party.

"Be careful, old fat sides," said Job, coming to his aid with the harpoon, "them fellers can fight like the very mischief when they get riled, so look out for yourself."

"You take one and I'll take t'other. I'll go for the right and you for the left. Come ahead."

It was by no means an easy task to attack two monstrous white bears, but the very daring of the thing proved its safety,

and it is more than likely that if the two men had shown the least sign of fear the two bears would have pursued and torn them to pieces.

Their determined advance puzzled the huge creatures exceedingly, and they remained motionless until the rotund Chucks was within a few feet of them, when, with a growl, the foremost animal made a rush.

The heavy brass gun was at the shoulder of Chucks in an instant, there was a loud report, a vivid flash, and the winged bomb with its sharp point sped swiftly upon its fatal errand.

It pierced the huge animal's side and then exploded, causing a terrible wound, actually tearing open the creature's side and letting out his life in a few moments.

The recoil of the gun had been greater than Chucks had expected, and he fell upon his back in a bank of snow.

The other bear made a savage rush upon him, and, but for Job, it would have fared badly with the jolly fellow.

Job was right there, however, and bracing himself firmly, jabbed his formidable weapon up to the very pole in the creature's side, piercing the heart, and coming out on the other side.

The bear rolled over, carrying the harpoon with him; but death had been instantaneous, and there was no struggle whatever.

Nat and Frank now ran up, and gazed with wonder upon the two huge beasts slain by their comrades, each weighing at least five hundred pounds.

"Golly! That was a close shave!" said Chucks, scrambling out of the snow and shaking the icy particles from him. "I didn't suppose the thing was going to cut up like that and go back on a feller. It's a double-barreled shame!"

"You're wrong, it has only one," retorted Nat. "Don't abuse it for doing its duty. That was a fine shot."

"I should remark that it was! If one of them bombs can play the deuce with a whale it isn't to be expected that a Polar bear is going to be of much use after it's gone into him—no, sir!"

"We want this oil," said Nat; "and after making our breakfast, we had better try out these fellows, and save it."

The animals were cut up, the hides being first removed, and then a fire was made and the pieces put on sharp stakes set into the ice.

Under the pieces the spare kegs and boat-buckets were placed, the oil running into them as fast as it oozed out—a primitive way of trying it, to be sure, but the best at hand.

As not a quarter of the immense carcasses could be thus utilized, there being an insufficient supply of utensils to contain the oil, much had to be thrown aside, but as it was frozen solid in a few moments, it could be easily thawed out and used when occasion required.

The party next climbed halfway to the top of the berg, taking a considerable length of rope with them to assist them in climbing, passing it around their bodies and leaving a slack between each one of them.

From the summit they beheld a perfect picture of desolation, not a sign of life being visible in any direction.

On all sides stretched a frozen sea, a narrow channel in the center being the only thing to break the monotony of the white surface.

Away to the northeast were some snow-covered peaks which might be land or icebergs, while to the north there appeared nothing but leaden skies, floating ice, and inky waters.

The air was cold and searching, and they could see that new ice was constantly forming, the floes packing and wedging in towards what seemed to be the land, and before long, they doubted not, the whole surface of the water would be covered with an icy barrier and their further progress stopped.

After viewing this scene of desolation, the awful silence op-

pressing their senses with unutterable gloom, they descended to the level once more, particularly as the snow began to fall again very heavily.

With great difficulty they made their way back to the camp, and getting under the lee of an icy bluff, as it might be called, rolled themselves up in the sail and went to sleep, covering their hands and faces carefully.

The snow drifted over their bodies, but this was an added protection from the cold, and so long as they were not buried too deeply, they were safe enough.

When Nat awoke, after what seemed a long sleep, and indeed it was, it was dark overhead and the snow had ceased falling, though the sky was still thickly overcast.

Crawling out from under his shelter, he shook the snow away from him, having poked his head up through it, and looked about him.

Presently Frank awoke and then the others, and as they were all rather hungry, they attacked the pemmican and hard-tack, washing them down with water from the kegs, or rather with lumps of ice put in their mouths, for the water, having been exposed the day before, was frozen solid.

Then they lit a fire, more for company than anything else, and sat around it, telling yarns and cracking jokes, everyone being in the best of spirits, for they still hoped to meet some vessel, either their own or another, which would take them home.

Not one suspected that they were destined to spend the long winter amid the ice and the dreary solitudes of the polar regions, but such was the lot ordained to them.

Neither did they know that those aboard the Arctic Fox had not only no intention of seeking them, but, on the contrary, had, in fact, abandoned them to their fate, only to meet a worse one themselves.

Consequently, they were high-spirited and cheery, not the slightest misgiving entered their minds, and it was well that it was so, and that knowledge of their probable fate was not suddenly forced upon them.

All that night they drifted along, and all the next day, and it was not until night fell once more that they began to fear that there was no help for them.

In the morning of the third day since landing upon the berg, Nat aroused his companions, and started out to make a further exploration.

Frank suddenly uttered an exclamation of intense surprise. "We are no longer moving," he said.

This was apparent in a moment, and a short walk opened their eyes still further.

The conical peak of their icy craft had been broken off at least a hundred feet and the huge blocks lay all around them, covered with snow, while on all sides lay a limitless expanse of solid ice.

They were upon the frozen deep with no hope of rescue!

"Let us push on," said Nat; "we cannot stay here, and we may find a shelter."

Making a sort of sledge of the ribs of their boat which still remained, covering it with the sail, and depositing their supplies thereon, they hitched ropes to it and dragged it behind them over the snow.

All day long they proceeded, going due north, all whale boats being provided with compasses, and theirs having been carefully saved, so that they could now consult it, encamping by night under a bluff and setting out once more at daybreak.

On the sixth day after their departure from the ship, as they were proceeding as usual, they climbed a steep ascent, and suddenly came upon a most remarkable sight.

This was no less than the dismantled hull of a ship, standing bolt upright, and covered thickly with ice and snow, which revealed only its form, the planks being sheathed with ice.

The jib-boom was broken off short, but standing upon the bowsprit between the knight-heads was some object which at first was not recognizable.

Hurrying forward with feverish excitement, they soon came near enough to make out the real character of this singular looking object.

It was the body of a man, frozen solid, and covered with snow and ice, standing as firmly as though carved from stone.

His feet were set closely together, but the hands were raised and held a spyglass to his sightless eyes.

The whole was one mass of ice, but the outlines were perfect, and even the fur mittens, hood, and high boots could be distinguished.

The man had evidently been caught in the ice, and while trying to see his way out had been frozen to death as he stood, and remaining there, no one could tell how long.

The four castaways gazed long and in deep silence upon this sad memento of man's weakness, when Nat broke the spell by exclaiming:

"Let us go aboard and unravel this secret of the frozen deep!"

CHAPTER VI.

THE SECRET ASSUMES COMPLICATIONS

With hasty steps the four companions approached the solitary ship, and looked about them for a means of ascending. Upon one side, near the quarter, there was a mound of ice, from which to the deck a natural bridge had been formed, and across this they soon made their way, standing at last where no human foot had trod for many years. The snow lay thick upon the deck, and the stumps of masts were masses of snow-covered ice, looking like sheeted specters keeping guard over the secrets of the lonely ship. The hatches were closed and sealed hermetically by that icy hand whose presence could be felt everywhere about; but the cabin door was partly open, the snow having drifted in a great white heap down the companionway. How long the ship had remained here no one could tell, nor how many years that ghastly sentinel upon the prow, whose sightless orbs were gazing into the mist and snow of this desolate region.

Nat and his comrades walked forward, their footsteps creaking upon the crisp snow, the freezing wind howling about them and the pitiless sky frowning down upon them, with its ever leaden hue hanging like a gray pall over their heads. Not a sound broke the awful stillness, and the very silence seemed to be an argument against its being broken, but Nat, nevertheless, dispelled the gloom by saying cheerily:

"Don't be downhearted, boys. There's no reason why we should be frozen up, if this poor fellow has been. I propose to make the hull our home, and who knows but what we may find provisions and the means of making ourselves comfortable aboard. Let us search the old hulk by all means. Come on! Follow me!"

"I believe you're right," spoke up Chucks. "I am sorry for that poor fellow there, but we needn't get down in the mouth on that account."

Nat had reached the cabin door by this time, the ship being provided with a sort of quarterdeck, and he at once laid hold of the door to force it open.

The snow and ice held it firmly, however, and it had to be demolished with the hatchet before they could make a place wide enough to pass through.

There was a flight of half a dozen steps before them, and down they walked, Nat and Frank clearing the ice upon them away so that there would be no danger of slipping. In spite of this, Chucks slipped, and landing upon his rear with a thud, slid down the steps and half way across the outer cab-

in, bringing up against the bulkhead with a force that nearly stood him up straight again.

"Golly!" he ejaculated, when he recovered his breath, that expletive being a favorite with him; "that was a bouncer, and no mistake. If it had been you that slipped down, Job, you'd 'a' broken in two."

"You're right, old porpoise, but I'm not so clumsy as you, and don't go sliding around wherever I am."

The cabin appeared to be a commodious one, containing several sitting and state-rooms, and was fitted up with every convenience, several nautical instruments being observed upon the walls and laid away in lockers. Casting merely a cursory glance around the place, looking through the doors, observing the general disposition of the room, the party passed through a door in the bulkhead, and so on through the steerage, with its commodious storerooms on either side, thence to the men's quarters. The forecabin was a large one, and was fitted up with a great number of bunks, a dining table with racks overhead, a large stove, and many other conveniences.

There were numerous closets, and in these were hung heavy sea-boots, fur suits, reefing jackets, oilskin coats and trousers, thick woollen shirts, and all the articles of wearing apparel necessary in such a climate—enough, all told, to furnish twenty men.

Nat suddenly uttered an exclamation of astonishment, and holding up the lantern, which he had lit in order to better explore the place, pointed to one of the bunks. The others crowded about him, and, peering over his shoulder, they saw the skeleton of a man, dressed in sailor's garb, lying in the berth.

An examination disclosed five more of the ghastly evidences of the presence of man, but that was all.

"I see it all," said Nat, gravely; "the crew died, alone in these inhospitable regions, the captain has gone on deck to look for help, and yon frozen effigy above our heads is all that remains of a once gallant commander."

Every Arctic explorer knows the necessity of keeping the officers and crew amused and entertained; consequently this vessel had taken a small library along, made up in a manner to suit every taste. Frank had noticed a case filled with numerous volumes in the cabin, but no particular attention had been paid to them at the time, the cabin being left for after inspection. Nat looked into the storerooms, and found several barrels of beef and pork, a large quantity of canned meats, soups, vegetables, and preserves, all of which seemed to be in good condition, and he wondered greatly why the men should have starved to death, as they evidently had, when there was enough and to spare for all their wants.

The forecabin hatch was found to have been secured strongly upon the inside, and Nat had no doubt that if the snow and ice above them were removed, it would be found that the hatch had been battened down.

There was nothing startling about this, as it had probably been done for reasons of safety and to retain all the heat in the forecabin, the men passing through the cabin when they desired to go on deck.

Nat, therefore, expressed no surprise that the forecabin should have been closed from the deck. The fact of there being a free passage leading to the cabin, which in most vessels is separated entirely from the rest of the vessel, and all means of communication shut off, being positive proof that the captain treated his crew, after their long imprisonment in the ice began, as so many comrades, treating all like. In the lower hold they found a considerable quantity of wood and coal, sufficient to last all winter, and this was another clause of the strange secret which was entombed in the heart of the silent watcher upon the bowsprit, keeping his fruitless lookout amid snow and ice.

"I can understand why the captain should have been overtaken suddenly by some fierce blast as he stood there trying to discover something, we know not what," observed Nat, "and that being instantly paralyzed, he had frozen to death as he stood, without the power to move hand or foot. All this I can explain, but why these men should have perished with so much at their command is a secret."

"And there's only six of them," muttered Job; "which with the captain makes seven, hardly enough to make a ship complete, by any means."

"There is more of a secret about the ship that at first appears, but I am resolved to know everything, if that is possible."

"Good for you, Nat!" grunted the ruddy Chucks. "Supposing that you find out all you want to, what are you going to do then?"

"Spend the winter here, and then, as we have advanced so far, build a boat out of the remains of this ship and start for the open Polar Sea and the North Pole."

"True to your name, are you not?" said Frank.

"Yes; it was this one ambition that led my father to these seas, and he lost his life here. I shall not do that, for I mean that America shall be the first nation to discover the Pole, and if nothing fails me, I shall be the first American to be there."

"How in time are you going to build a boat?" asked Chucks, open-mouthed.

"There are axes and saws, hammers, adzes, nails, and rivets in abundance right here," answered Nat. "All we want is willing hands, brave hearts, and patient endurance, and with these the work is already begun."

"You shall have 'em!" exclaimed Job, fired with Nat's enthusiasm. "Go ahead, Nat, and we'll follow you as far as you want to go."

"Thanks," said Nat. "Your prompt accession to the wish nearest my heart touches me greatly. We have nothing to fear, everything to hope! There is no danger of our perishing, and when the spring opens, we can be all ready to set out, thereby gaining much valuable time. I promise you that if it is a possible thing, you shall all be at the North Pole in one year from now!"

"Hurrah for North Pole Nat!" shouted Job. "I vote we make him our captain! What d'ye say?"

"Ay, ay!" they all shouted, and Nat was unanimously chosen to that most important position.

CHAPTER VII.

THE CAPTAIN ABANDONED.

Let us return for a while to the Arctic Fox and see what has happened since Nat's disappearance.

At the time that Mr. Cartwright's boat was seen to be falling behind, a squall struck the bark, the same which afterwards came upon the captain's boat.

The shipkeeper, fearing that the crew on board would be insufficient to manage her, signaled to one of the boats to return, the order being observed by the waistboat in command of the second mate, Mr. Jones.

His crew, with the assistance of those already on board, succeeded in managing the bark and took in sail, the boats of the first and second mates being still in the water.

Ed Lewis then went to the masthead again and signaled all the boats to return, in accordance with a plan entered into between him and Mr. Cartwright, previous to setting out.

The mate allowed the second mate to pass him, and then returned to the vessel.

At that time the captain's boat was being towed by the whale—a fact well known to Lewis, notwithstanding that he had signaled for the return to the ship.

The third mate, Mr. Wright, being favorable to the captain,

did not know of the plot against him, and seeing that the captain made no signs of returning, continued upon his course.

"The whales have disappeared, Mr. Cartwright," said Lewis, coming down from aloft, "and I have signaled for the captain to return."

"Has he done so?"

"No, sir."

"Stand on a bit, Ed, and we will await him till nightfall; after that we must take care of ourselves, as the new ice is making fast, and we are in great danger of being caught."

This was said in order that there might seem to be a sufficient excuse for the abandonment of the captain if ever the case came up afterwards.

The Arctic Fox was presumably standing on to be ready to take up the other boats, but in reality she was making little headway, the helmsman having been given a course to steer which amounted to little else than laying to.

"You'd better go up again, Ed," said Mr. Cartwright half an hour after his arrival on board, "and see if they are yet returning."

"Ay, ay, sir!" and the man, giving a wink to his superior which the latter fully understood, mounted to the crosstrees, glass in hand.

After a long look he suddenly shouted:

"Mr. Wright's boat has swamped, sir, struck by a squall."

The third mate's boat had swamped, but not for the reason given by the treacherous shipkeeper, the real state of the case being that the smaller whale, in sounding, had changed his course, coming directly for the other boat, and rising under it.

It was thrown into the air to a considerable height, and stove all to pieces, the men flying over one another's heads in great confusion.

The officer was struck by the heavy line tub and forced under water, being insensible from the blow.

The harpooner got entangled in the line and was drawn under, and utterly unable to extricate himself, was drowned, the same fate meeting two of the seamen who had never learned to swim—not a rare thing in many old sailors.

The other two men seized a pair of oars apiece and kept themselves afloat upon the ice, but as for any hope of being picked up, they might just as well have given up the idea and suffered themselves to be drowned.

Ed Lewis came down and reported the true state of the case to the mate, saying that the two seamen appeared to be still floating upon the waves.

"Let 'em float and be cussed to 'em!" growled the mate. "We're rid of 'em! Ahoy, there! Make ready to go in stays!" he shouted to the sailors gathered forward.

The men looked at one another, and one old tar advanced and touched his hat, saying:

"Are you going to put about, sir, when the skipper is still out?"

"Mind your own business and do as I say!" roared the officer, with an oath. "About ship, there! Hard up your wheel!"

"No, no! It's a shame to abandon him!" said three or four of them.

"Do as I tell you!" thundered the mate. "You old fool, I command this vessel, and I mean to be obeyed! Fly around there lively! Don't you see we're all aback?"

The men flew to their tasks and put the vessel about, all except the old man and his adherents, who did nothing.

"Come aft here, Tom Bunt!" said the mate, when the maneuver had been successfully accomplished, and the man obeyed.

"What d'ye mean by this mutiny against my authority?" demanded Cartwright.

"It isn't mutiny, sir, but I didn't like to see the captain left alone, when there's every chance of his being picked up."

"There is, is there? Didn't you hear the shipkeeper say his boat had foundered?"

"No, sir, I didn't, and she ain't! I saw her myself, this very minute towed by the big whale, and Job Hawkins makin' a second dart."

Tom Bunt turned and looked in the direction of the boats, but a heavy mist had settled down between him and them, and nothing could be seen.

"No, sir, I don't, but I believe he's there, all the same."

"Look here, you old reprobate, you're an old sailor and a good one, which makes what you say reasonable, but you don't know everything. If any other man had acted so he'd have gone in irons right away."

"I only did what I thought right, sir."

"Who told you to think? Mutiny ain't right, whatever you can say. Mr. Jones, put these men in irons," pointing to Tom's followers. "You shall escape this time, Tom, but let me tell you to be careful. I am captain here now."

"But the skipper, sir?"

"The skipper is dead. Do you see that ice making all about us? The skipper can't reach us, and if we wait we'll be lost. He chose to disobey the signal to return, and must take the consequences. Now go below."

Tom obeyed reluctantly, not at all satisfied with the turn affairs had taken, feeling confident that the captain might have been picked up.

The two sailors floating alone on the sea saw the white wings of the bark turn about, and the vessel speed away from them, and knew that they were without all hope.

The clouds shut in between them, and nothing was to be seen of vessel or boat, and they groaned in their agony of spirit, knowing that their case was a hopeless one.

The icy waters chilled them to the bone, and already that fatal drowsiness, which is the forerunner of death, was upon them.

"Cheer up, Jack," said one. "The skipper will be coming along pretty soon."

Poor Jack tried to smile, but his numbed hands were already slipping from his frail support, and before his comrade could aid him, he had dropped off into the sea and sank out of sight.

The lone sailor made a grab for him, but he merely succeeded in catching the oars, which formed a better support for himself.

Alone in the darkness, the snow falling thickly around him, he drifted along with the tide, scarcely knowing he lived, while the ice began to surge about him, and threatened to crush him with its jagged sides.

He was conscious of being struck by something, and reaching out, seized it with one hand.

It was the steering oar lost from the captain's boat, and made a valuable addition to his raft.

His clothes were waterproof, and as very little moisture had penetrated, he was not in as much danger as he might have been had he been wet through, the water being warmer than the outer air.

Some time in the night he was conscious of crawling upon a cake of ice and drawing the oars up after him, so as not to come in direct contact with the ice.

Then, utterly exhausted, he fell asleep and knew no more, drifting along in the ice-choked current, helpless and alone.

On board the Arctic Fox the mate had assumed command, and was holding a consultation in his stateroom with Mr. Jones and the shipkeeper in regard to their future movements.

"There is no doubt that we can make Baffin's Bay, and thence take the current down and make land," he was saying.

"Does the current run south at this time?" asked Jones.

"Certainly, and won't be choked with ice. We can get out easy enough, and if we don't, we can make some point either in Greenland or British America."

"The current sets against us now," remarked Lewis, "and I believe we're making sternway all the time."

"Nonsense! We're making six knots, and by frequent tacking can make more. The wind's against us, that's bad, but with our sharp cutwater and strong bows, the ice won't bother us much."

They were not as safe as they supposed, for during the night the man on the lookout fell asleep, and ten minutes later the vessel crashed into an iceberg, carrying away her bowsprit and three feet of her bows.

A mass of ice, weighing several tons, becoming detached from the berg, fell upon her deck and completed the work of destruction, the bark foundering in ten minutes, being buoyed up for a while by the berg, upon one part of which she had slid for several feet.

Thus did a horrible fate stare in the faces of the men who had so heartlessly abandoned their kind captain.

CHAPTER VIII.

CHUCKS MAKES A DISCOVERY.

At the first crash Cartwright rushed upon deck, and seeing what had happened, ordered the two boats, with the spare ones on the house, to be lowered at once, and as much water and provisions put in them as was possible under the circumstances.

The larboard and waist boats were lowered, and into them scrambled Cartwright, Jones, Ed Lewis, the carpenter, cook, and a dozen seamen, when they were pulled away with all possible speed.

Cartwright secured the nautical instruments, two kegs of water, some cooked meat, and a keg of hardtack, Jones seeing that his boat was equally well supplied with provisions.

No one thought of the men below in irons, and they were left to their fate, many sharing the same fortune, as in the hurry and confusion one of the spare boats was capsized while being lowered.

Two or three of the sailors got off the wooden cover of the tryworks and made an extemporized raft of it, putting on a barrel of water and provisions, which they lashed as firmly as they could, taking a pair of oars to guide their queer craft.

Old Tom Bunt scrambled out upon the ice none too soon, for the bark settled immediately afterward, and more than a dozen souls were lost.

The two boats—the officers unheeding the cries of the men to be saved—put off into the current, leaving the poor wretches to be drowned or float upon the ice.

Little did Cartwright care whether they were saved or not, as long as he was secure, and he actually struck one poor fellow over the head as he clung to the gunwale of the boat, and pushed him into the sea.

When morning came, the three traitors found themselves on the shores of an almost desolate coast, the ice fast closing in, and a howling tempest of mingled snow and sleet prevailing.

They hauled their boats upon the shore, and turning them up, got under their lee and remained there until the storm abated, which was not until late in the afternoon.

"The winter has set in," said Cartwright, the next morning, when he arose and looked about him; "and in spite of all our efforts, we must remain here for nine long, dreary months."

"I don't see as it can be helped now," muttered Jones.

"I have a plan."

"What is it?"

"The Esquimaux and Indians of these parts are not over friendly to the whites, and I don't propose to trust them, but up north I know of a ship where we can remain in safety."

"A ship?"

"Yes—abandoned in the ice in the region of perpetual snow. She is well supplied, and will afford us a shelter from the winds."

"And after that?"

"After that we can make our way over the waters of Kane Bay, or some other channel, to land and get a ship."

"It's a hard outlook!"

"But the only one. Let's drag our boats thither and secure a shelter at once."

"It is two or three hundred miles at least."

"And can be accomplished in ten days at the outside."

Some of the men demurred, and four or five set out alone on foot toward the south, determined to risk finding a shelter in that direction rather than go further north.

The next morning their bodies were found, frozen stiff, by a party of Esquimaux.

Cartwright prevailed on this same party to provide them with sledges, and he and his comrades, with six men besides, started out on their perilous journey.

"What is the name of the ship you expect to find?" asked Jones, on the morning of the third day after their departure. "I had forgotten all about that until now."

"It is the Adventurer."

"What! The exploring vessel commanded by that mad——"

"Sh! Yes, it is the same. I know where she lies, and though it is a rough journey, it is our only chance."

For the present we will leave the treacherous party, for whom a worse fate was prepared than that which befell the captain, and return to our hero up among the desolate regions, where the silent figure of the frozen captain stood guard over the abandoned ship.

After Nat had been unanimously chosen the leader of the little band, he determined that they should return to the cabin and try and determine their position by the sextant.

"I am afraid we can't do that, my young friend," remarked Job, "for the sun don't shine for a cent."

"It will come out some day, anyhow, and if only for a minute, that will be long enough. You understand navigation?"

"Like a book."

"Then you shall teach me."

"With all my heart."

"And I will join the class also," spoke up Frank, his girlish face lighting up with a smile. "I'm bound to do everything that Nat does."

"Good enough!" yelled Chucks, slapping his fat sides. "I honestly believe you're in love with Nat."

Frank blushed deeply but made no reply, and by this time they were once more in the cabin.

"I'll tell you what you can do, Chucks," said Nat; "take one of the axes and clear away the ice from the stove-pipe hole up there aft."

"Well?"

"Then we'll rig up the pipe that's in the closet there, and we'll have a roaring fire in this stove in less than no time."

"Good enough! Golly! you're an artist, Nat! Who'd ever have thought of doing that?"

"You would if you weren't so fat," answered Job. "Nobody would ever feel cold that had such a furnace inside 'em as you've got. It's a wonder you don't melt the ice when you sit on it."

Chucks laughed with the rest, being remarkably goodnatured, and then went on deck to perform his allotted task.

While he cleared away the hole, Nat put the stove in order,

Frank brought in coal, and Job got the pipe, and with a sound ax cut enough wood from the lower hold forward to start a fire with.

At last the hole was cleared; the pipe fitted, a roaring fire started in the stove by means of a flint and steel, and before long a slight warmth began to be perceptible in the place.

The deadeyes and portholes, being covered thickly with ice and snow, admitted no light, and they were dependent upon their lamps for illumination.

The cabin was still quite cold, the thermometer standing at the freezing point, and quite a roaring fire had to be built before they could with safety take off their outer coverings.

"What was your father's name, Nat?" asked Chucks, presently, while Job was getting the coffee and Frank heating the water.

"Alonzo," answered Nat.

"Are you sure? Wasn't it N. Evans, New York," as if reading from something.

Nat observed the tone, and turned quickly to Chucks.

"Where do you see that?" he asked quickly.

"On this thermometer."

CHAPTER IX.

THE SECRET IS PARTLY REVEALED.

Nat was at Chucks' side in an instant.

"Where do you see it?" he asked, excitedly.

"Here, on the bottom, engraved on a plate. Don't you see it? It says 'N. Evans, New York,' as plain as daylight."

It was not because Nat did not see the inscription that he kept silence, but because his heart was too full to permit him to speak.

"What's the matter?" asked Frank, suddenly turning to Nat and seeing his pale face, his own instantly flushing scarlet. "Are you ill?"

"No. Bring me the quadrant in the locker yonder."

Frank brought it and put it into Nat's hands.

There was a silver plate upon the lower portion of one of the bars, and this was engraved with several lines of letters.

"You will find a piece of chamois skin there, most likely, Frank. Will you bring it?"

Frank found it sure enough, and Nat quickly applied it to the engraved plate, making the following inscription visible:

"Nathan Alonzo Evans, New York City, U. S. A. Master Ship Adventurer."

"Golly! who'd supposed it!" said Chucks, as Nat read off the inscription.

"This instrument belonged to my father," said Nat. "He was named Nathan Alonzo, and was generally called by the latter name to avoid confusion, as I was called Nat. He often used to put 'N. Evans' on his books, however."

"The Adventurer was his last ship, wasn't it?" asked Job; "and she never came back?"

"No. He set out to discover the North Pole, and since that time we have never seen or heard from him."

"We are aboard the Adventurer now."

"Why do you think so?"

"Because I saw the name on the men's chests, and on the things in the cupboards. I didn't think anything about it before."

"Here it is on the chronometer," said Frank, suddenly. "It says in plain writing:

"Made for ship Adventurer, Arctic explorer A. N. Evans, master, by Hart Bros., nautical instruments, N. Y."

"One of the secrets has been revealed to us, then," said Nat. "Yes, and another, for if this vessel is the Adventurer, then that icebound watcher above our heads is——"

"Who?" said all three, in a breath.

"My father!"

"It must be so," said Frank; "for I have heard that he never would desert his ship."

"It is beyond a doubt," said Nat; "but I cannot understand why only six men should have remained to him out of a large crew. There were about fifty, I believe, including officers and men."

"The water's boiling," said Chucks. "Slap in your coffee, Job, and I'll pour in the water. The best thing to do now is to get supper, for remember, we haven't had anything to eat since breakfast."

"Right! We must not neglect our regular habits," said Nat.

For supper they had some good strong coffee, taken as hot as they could drink it, a kettle of beef soup, with fresh vegetables, hardtack, and preserved peaches, a meal which, for a set of castaways, might have been considered remarkably luxurious.

Nat fixed the fire so that it could not go out, putting on sufficient coal to make it last all night, and then they turned in, the berths of the cabin being in good shape, and slept until morning.

The change from a bed in a snowbank, under the lee of a broken boat or jagged rock, to a comfortable berth in a well warmed cabin was a delightful one indeed to our wanderers, and they appreciated it to the utmost.

In the morning Nat awoke and aroused them all, made them take a run across the ice half a mile and back before they had anything to eat or drink.

When they returned, all in a glow, as might have been expected, Chucks puffing like a porpoise, they all had a mug of hot coffee, and then, after taking another run, sat down to breakfast, which was substantial, but not so varied as the meal of the night before.

"One thing must be done first of all," said Nat, "before we do anything else. The men in the forecabin and the silent guardian of the deck must be buried, as that is a duty we owe to humanity."

The bodies were brought out one by one and laid upon the ice, all hands then preparing to cut holes into which to place them.

A crosscut saw was provided, and the work of cutting begun; but though the party went some distance from the ship, where the ice seemed to be newer, they found that they would have to cut at least six feet before reaching water.

The task was, therefore, too arduous for them to undertake, and, instead, they cut a long trench about three feet wide and deep, with picks and axes, and then laid the bodies in, covering them with sailcloth, after which they threw in the loose ice.

Having done this duty, the next thing was the removal of the frozen figure from the bowsprit.

This was quite a task, as the figure was one mass of solid ice, weighing many hundred pounds, and riveted, as it were, to the bowsprit in a position most difficult of access.

Nat, believing the body to be that of his father, hesitated about doing it any injury, and yet it seemed almost impossible to get it down without cutting it to pieces.

At last, seeing that the task was more difficult than he had thought, and unwilling to disfigure the body in any way, Nat concluded that he had better let it remain where it was.

"Let him continue in the future, as he has in the past, to watch over the ship," said Nat. "Now that it is our home, it will seem all the more appropriate that I should have such a guardian."

The silent figure, with the glass ever raised to its eyes, which saw nothing, remained, therefore, at its post, and kept its unrelenting watch day and night, while the wind whistled and the snow whirled around him, and the long Polar night gradually drew near.

When this task had been abandoned it was time for dinner, and Nat and all hands went below and indulged in a hearty meal, Job and Chucks enjoying a smoke after it.

"Now, the next thing to do is to find out what time it is, and wind up our chronometers," said Nat, "and after that not let them run down."

"How are you going to find out?" asked Chucks.

"What day was it that we sighted those whales."

"September 24," said Frank, "and I remember it, because the next day was my birthday."

"This is the eighth day since, and consequently the 2d of October. Put it down on the calendar. October 2, 1869, is the present day. We arrived here on the first. In another month we shall have the night upon us."

Job wound the chronometer and set it at a guess for noon, meaning to correct it afterwards, as soon as he could take an observation.

"We'll call it twelve o'clock," said Job; "because it can't be far away from that. When I get a chance to look at the sun I'll fix him all right."

Gradually the sun broke through the clouds and darted his warm rays for an instant upon the little group standing on the deck of the lone ship.

Job clapped his eye to the instrument in an instant, and began adjusting it to the proper angles.

At last he had it suited to his purpose, and he squinted through the telescope, muttering something to himself.

"Twelve o'clock!" he shouted in a few moments. "Set your old clock! Now let me get another squint, and I will tell you where we are!"

Nat spread out the chart, and Job pointed to a place upon it.

"We are beyond Griswold Land," he said; "beyond Kane Basin."

"Are we on water or land?"

"We are stuck on the rocks, my lad—forced up by the ice! May the Lord help us when it breaks up!"

CHAPTER X.

A GREAT DISCOVERY.

"Come here, boys," said Nat, suddenly, "I have found the log of the Adventurer."

"Read it, Nat," said Job; "you may find a clew to the secrets of the place."

Having secured the closest attention, Nat cleared his throat and began the following romantic history, which we call:

The Cruise of the Adventurer.

August 7, 1866.—We weighed anchor this afternoon and set sail from Cumberland Island, British North America, where we have been recruiting for the last two weeks.

All promises well for our search, and I have no doubt that we shall reach a point far enough north to enable us to get to the open sea before the worst of the winter sets in.

From there I shall not venture to take the vessel, but in the sectional boats shall launch out upon that still untraveled highway, the Polar Sea, and direct my course along the parallel of 75 degrees west longitude straight to the North Pole.

My crew is harmonious, and, to a man, all with me in my project. Cartwright, in particular, seems to be thoroughly imbued with the idea of finding the Pole.

I have never started out under such bright auspices, and I seem to feel already that I have succeeded. May the future be as full of promise as the present.

August 18.—We have passed through Smith's Sound, and have seen icebergs. The ice is forming earlier than usual, but still I have hopes of being able to keep far enough north

to carry out my project of wintering on the shores of the open sea.

August 23.—What do these strange forebodings mean? The men are becoming discontented, rebellious, almost mutinous. Someone is at work poisoning their minds against me. Of this I feel assured, but who is the man?

The ice is growing alarmingly thick in the water, and sometimes we have great difficulty in getting through. We are now as far north as anyone has ever penetrated, but I am not satisfied with that, and am determined to go further.

I have no such a good idea of Cartwright as I had, and I fear that he is the man who is setting the men against me. To-day I reasoned with him, but it did not seem to have any effect upon his hardened nature.

Henceforth I shall beware of Cartwright.

When our hero had reached this point he paused from excitement, as well as from want of breath, for he had read in a rapid, nervous manner, which, although perfectly intelligible, excited the others more than it did himself.

"Golly, I wonder if that is the same Cartwright who was mate on the whaler?" said Chucks.

"Without doubt," said Nat; "the name is not a common one by any means."

"Besides that," said Frank, "he was with your father in his last voyage."

They all looked wonderingly at Frank as he uttered these words, and he blushed like a girl, saying quickly:

"So I have been told by those who knew Captain Evans."

"Why, Frank, my lad," said Nat, laughing, "you're a regular wonder book to me. I never knew you were acquainted with any of my father's friends, or that you knew anything concerning his voyages."

"Well, I don't know very much, but I know this that Mr. Cartwright bore your father no good-will, and there are those who told me he deserted the captain."

"The wretch! I'd like to get hold of him once," remarked Chucks. "Golly! I'd roast him over a slow fire instead of a hot one, like them Esquimaux what Frank tells about."

"Go ahead, Nat," said Frank, when the laughter had subsided, and Nat continued his reading:

August 31, 1866.—A cruel blow has fallen upon me. A day or so after the conversation with Cartwright, the ice became more difficult to pass, and I began to feel alarmed.

I would have started earlier than I did, but Cartwright delayed me at Cumberland Island over a week, and I should not have been there two days, at most.

I can now see his motive plainly, and I am confident that he never intended I should reach the Pole. He didn't dare kill me, for that was a step which his wicked companions would not take.

They would have had no hesitation in abandoning me, but to kill me outright was more than they cared to do, though I believe Cartwright would have attempted it, had he not been afraid they would avenge my murder.

It was noon, and I had just taken an observation, finding to my intense surprise and gratification that we were in north latitude 84, two degrees higher than any recorded journey ever made.

I had gone below to enter this in my regular log, when I heard a confused murmur upon deck, the sound of voices now and again rising above the tumult.

Filled with a grave apprehension which I dared not express in words, I hastily armed myself with a cutlass, and rushed upon deck.

A strange sight met my gaze, which for a moment nearly paralyzed me.

Arranged on one side of the deck were all but seven or eight of my crew, led by the arch traitor Cartwright, well armed and evidently desperate.

On the other side were the few who remained faithful, and, though they were but a handful, they appeared fully as determined as their opponents, in spite of the disparity in their numbers.

"What means this disturbance?" I asked.

Cartwright stepped forward and thus addressed me, his proud lip curling with scorn:

It means that fifty odd and more lives are not to be sacrificed to the whims of a mad visionary. It means that we are determined to go no further north. It means that unless our demands are complied with quietly we shall enforce our demands by force of arms."

"This is mutiny!" I cried, enraged, never fearing them, though they far outnumbered me and my still faithful followers. Had they been a hundred, and not a single man remained true to me, I would not have feared them.

"Call it what you please," sneered the traitor. "We are the stronger and you must submit."

They threw themselves headlong upon us, and a tremendous struggle ensued, during which two of my party were slain, and I received a wound, so that I am still weak from loss of blood.

So gallantly did my men behave that though our loss was but two, that of the enemy was seven killed and more than that badly wounded, showing that the fight if not the might was upon our side.

Presently Cartwright called a truce, and said he would give me one more day to decide.

To this we all agreed, but in the night, midway in the morning watch, there came a great shock, and running up to see what had happened, I found that the ship had run into a solid mass of ice which immediately closed all around us! We were lost!

CHAPTER XI.

MURDERED AND ABANDONED.

I could not tell whether the helmsman had steered the vessel purposely upon the ice or not, but there we were, completely blocked in, the jibboom broken off short, and the mainmast badly sprung.

There was nothing to be done but to wait till the morning, so I gave a few general orders and returned to my cabin.

When the sun appeared above the horizon, I went on deck, feeling as if I had slept a longer time than usual.

On all hands extended the ice, a white, glittering mass, with fantastic peaks here and there, and away in the distance a huge iceberg.

I called aloud for someone to come on deck, but there was no answer, and in a moment the truth began to dawn upon me.

I had been abandoned!

Rushing down to the cabin, I now, for the first time, perceived a strong odor of chloroform, and a hasty search revealed a bottle of the stuff lying in my berth close to my pillow.

I gazed at the chronometer and saw that there was but an hour or so of daylight remaining, and that I had slept several hours beyond my time.

The chloroform explained this, and I did not doubt that Cartwright had administered the drug as I lay asleep.

Throwing open the cabin door so that the fresh air might enter, I passed through into the fore-castle for the purpose of ascertaining if the men had been drugged in the same manner as myself, never doubting that Cartwright had served us all the same way.

When I opened the fore-castle door, which was quite tight

and impervious to draughts, a heavy, sickening odor greeted my nostrils.

The air was charged with carbonic acid, and I felt so faint that I returned to the cabin, leaving the doors open so that a strong draught swept through the ship.

I hastened upon deck, and found that there was still time to take an observation.

Trembling with excitement, I worked the reckoning, and found that I had reached 86 degrees north.

The remainder of the journey could be easily made in a week, or even if it took a month, what was that? We had our boats and also balloons.

Hurrying to the storeroom where they were kept, what was my horror to find that it had been broken open.

Every balloon, every section boat, every spare oar and mast, and a large supply of provisions had been taken, and I felt myself overcome.

After a while I grew calmer, and then returned to the fore-castle, the noxious odor having somewhat abated.

To my surprise I found my six faithful comrades lying in bed, and I called to them to arouse themselves.

Suddenly an awful suspicion crossed my mind.

I threw open the door of the little stove which gave heat to the place; the fire was out, but the truth dawned upon me at once.

The poor fellows had been killed by the fumes of charcoal with which Cartwright had filled the stove.

September 10, 1866.—I am utterly alone! I have no doubt that Cartwright has made his way to the south, but it may be that he has gone on, and having made that discovery which mankind has been striving to make since the earliest times, has returned, flushed with triumph.

September 20.—There is no hope. I have been every day to my station on the bowsprit to see if I can discover any opening in the ice, but without success.

There is food in abundance, and had I a companion, I should be entirely contented, but this terrible loneliness is wearing upon me, and I fear will bring on a fit of sickness, which I dread more than anything.

October 1, 1866.—It is very cold, and although I keep the fires, going, they do not seem to make me any more comfortable. I shall have to put up another stove in the cabin. I know I am getting sick, and perhaps I ought not to go out so much, but what can I do?

Before I close this book for the day, I will write down the hope that I have of somebody's coming here, and shall then go on deck to see what I can discover through the glass.

May the good God above watch over my son Nat, and if I perish, as I may, in spite of my ardent hopes of seeing once more my own home, I trust that He who made me will guard the boy aright, and bring him to manhood.

It is my wish that he follow up the researches I have made, and, if it is possible, reach the Pole.

There is a considerable treasure in this ship, and if any man should find it, I charge him to give it to my son, if living, and if not, to use it only for the purpose of making further researches.

The villains would have taken that, had they known where it was, but it is still safe, and shall remain so until I am delivered, or my son hears of my fate.

Frank took Nat's hand and said: "Never mention Cartwright's name in my presence."

"What do you mean?"

"That the scoundrel is my father!"

"Impossible!"

"Not so!"

"But your name is Frank Trafton!"

"It is Francis Trafton Cartwright, and I am the son of a murderer!"

He seemed about to faint, and Nat sprang forward to assist him.

With a strange cry he repelled the young man, and summoning all his strength, rushed out of the cabin and upon the deck.

CHAPTER XII.

FRANK MAKES A REVELATION.

Nat ran upon deck, and found Frank standing by the rail of the stranded ship, gazing out upon the dreary landscape.

"What is the matter, old fellow?" he asked, soothingly, for he had taken a great fancy to the lad, and did not like to see him in distress.

"Nothing, now," answered Frank. "I felt faint, but that has passed away since I came out here."

"You say you are the son of that vi— of Mr. Cartwright?"

"Yes. You hate me for it; I am sure you despise, and—"

"No, no, Frank, I don't; I like you better than any boy I ever knew. It is not your fault that you are the son of this man. Believe me, I have no wish to visit the sins of the father upon his child."

"Did you know all you might."

"Know all? What do you mean?"

"I was charged by my father to compass your death, and I promised to do it."

Nat retreated a pace or two, not in fear, but from surprise.

"You promised that," he said.

"Yes, but then I did not know you, did not love you as I do now. Believe me, I would protect you now with my last drop of blood."

The boy's voice was as tender and soft as a woman's, and his large, expressive eyes were ready to overflow with tears.

"And you promised your father that you would take my life?"

"Yes, but I will not keep it, for now I know what a monster he is. Let him beware, if ever we meet again!"

"Why should he wish to have me killed?"

"It is a long story."

"Will you tell it?"

"Yes, but no one else must hear the recital. You've a right to know what to be prepared for, but I dare not confide the story to anyone else."

"It is not nearly as cold as it was, suppose we take a walk across the ice, we can easily find our way back, for we will not go far."

Nat and Frank made their way down and started off together across the ice.

The solitary guardian of their icebound vessel could be seen at a great distance, and there was no danger of their getting lost as long as they kept him in sight.

"My father still watches over me," observed Nat, turning around to look at the figure, "and I cannot but feel that this block of ice, which is all that remains of him, will be of more protection than I imagine."

"How cheerful that smoke looks, pouring out from the pipe," said Frank, pausing to look at their lonely dwelling. "It gives an air of home to the place, which it did not have when we first found it."

"What say you to a smart run, to warm our blood and put new life into us?"

"All right! I'll beat you to yonder round-topped clump; the path here is quite smooth."

Away scudded the two boys over the crisp snow, their merry laughter ringing upon the air and awakening the echoes which doubtless never before had heard the welcome sound.

Frank reached the goal first, and standing upon the highest point, threw snowballs at Nat as he came up.

Our hero scrambled up to the top of the knoll, and then when both were seated, Nat with his arm around Frank to keep him from falling, he said:

"Now, then, my boy, let me hear your story, and be assured that, no matter what others may feel against you, I have no hard feeling toward you."

"The first time I heard anything about Captain Evans," Frank, "was about four years ago, when my father used frequently to talk about his Arctic explorations. He ridiculed the man, and said that the North Pole would never be found; that it was impossible, and that the people might as well give up the idea at once.

"When I discovered afterwards that he had sailed with this same Captain Evans, I thought it very strange, and could not account for the change. However, I presumed that he had been made a good offer, and that on that account he had consented to lay aside his prejudices.

"The preceding voyage had not been a good one, and he had lost considerable money, as had many other whalemén. As he now had a certainty, I did not doubt that he was perfectly willing to change his views, and do for money what he had before ridiculed, set out to find the North Pole.

"When I next saw him, he said that Evans was probably dead, that their vessel had been caught in the ice, and that he, and the head of a party sent to find relief, had been captured by Indians.

"He had spent the winter with them, he said, and had then been rescued by a party of his own countrymen, after which he had sailed for home.

"Only three or four of his comrades had escaped, and he told a pitiful story of the cruel hardships they had suffered in the frozen regions of the north.

"He did not seem altogether satisfied in his mind that his old captain was dead; and I often fancied that he meant to go north and ascertain. He said that they had been separated, and that maybe Evans was still safe, as such things had been known as men passing the severe northern winter in safety and resuming their voyages in the spring.

"Time passed, and people generally seemed to forget the Arctic explorer, though Cartwright did not, and talked of him constantly. When he agreed on the voyage with Captain Hathaway, he told me that I was to go as cabin-boy, he having made all arrangements.

"That young Nat Evans will be aboard, Frank," he said, 'and I want you to look out for him. His father ruined me, and this young cub will try and do the same.'

"I was astonished, and asked what he meant, being informed in reply that Evans had plotted against him, had maligned his character, and caused not only his financial ruin, but had made it impossible for him to hold up his head in good society.

"He has dishonored me, and his son stands where you ought to be," he continued. 'Only blood can wipe out the offense, and if you are a true child of mine you will kill this brat of his at the first opportunity.'

"I was known as Frank Trafton, and no one supposed me to be his son, the captain even having been told that I was merely a boy that the mate knew and wanted to befriend. From hating you, as I had done after hearing his story, I began to hate him instead, and swore that nothing should harm you.

"He probably fears you because he imagines that you may somehow learn of his treachery to your father, and that is why he wishes you out of the way. He is a villain, and I hope we may never meet again, for I disown him, and will de-

nounce him for his villainy. You are my best friend, Nat, and I will stand by you till the last."

"I know it, my lad; and now suppose we go back to the ship."

CHAPTER XIII.

A CRY IN THE NIGHT.

For the next four or five days the icebound comrades were busily occupied in making their winter home more thoroughly comfortable even than it was already, although there had as yet been no cause for complaint.

Regularity was the controlling force in the life of the castaways, and everything was done as if by clockwork, Nat maintaining that this was the only way by which they could hope to retain their health and happiness.

Two weeks more passed away, and the ship was as comfortable as heart could wish, the inmates were healthy, happy, and perfectly contented, being well able to endure the cold weather, and having so much to do that they never thought of being blue, or of being anything but the most harmonious of mortals.

They had seen neither men nor animals since their arrival, and the solemn silence was never broken, save by their own cheerful voices.

All this, however, was to be changed, and their quiet, happy life was to be broken in upon by a harsh, discordant element which they would have done much to keep out.

November came in, and now the night was perpetual, the aurora being the only thing which served to break the monotony of the long darkness.

The snow continued to fall at intervals, and occasionally it was found necessary to dig a passage through it from the cabin doors to the ship's rail.

The doors had been made to open inward, and as there were two sets, whatever snow might have drifted past the first was prevented from going any further by the second, the outer ones serving the same purpose as stormdoors in our city houses.

The deck of the vessel was covered to a considerable depth with the snow, and fearing lest it might be crushed by the weight, Nat and his companions shoveled away the extra quantities which had fallen since their arrival, throwing it over the side of the vessel and building a regular inclined railway down to the ice.

The supply chests were overhauled, and the warmest clothing brought out and thoroughly aired, so that no dampness should cling to it, after which our party proceeded to make use of whatever they required.

Frank occasionally wore the poor captain's great fur-lined coat and an extra hood with a high conical peak to it, in which attire he looked like a merry specimen of some curious tribe of animals, half bear and half human.

"You look like a ghost in bearskins," laughed Chucks, the coat and hood being of white fur, "and if I didn't know you, I think I should be almost scared."

"Hark!" said Frank, suddenly, in an impressive tone.

"What's the matter?" asked Nat.

"I hear someone calling."

"Blowed if I don't hear something myself," said Job; "but it might be the wind."

There was a silence for several minutes, not a word being spoken, but every ear strained to hear the repetition of the sound, which, as yet, Frank alone had heard.

Halloo! Hal-loo! Hal-loo!"

Now they all hear it, and gaze in each other's faces with the greatest excitement.

"Halloo, halloo, halloo!"

"There it is again!" said Chucks "and there is someone an-

swering them. Hold on! What do you make out of that other sound? I'll tell you it's pack of snarling Spitz dogs."

"Then there is a party of Esquimaux in sledges," said Frank, hastily. "The ice below here is now smooth enough on account of the snow for them to travel over. They will be here shortly."

"Go below, then, every man," said Nat. "Let us hope they may not see us. These wretches are capable of any treachery where they outnumber the whites. If they do find us out we can defend ourselves."

They all hurried below, the outer and inner doors being both securely fastened with heavy bars that had been made for that purpose.

"Now, let us consider," said the young leader, when they had all gathered below. "If they attack us, what means of defense have we."

"I have got that big brass bomb-gun," said Chucks. "I reckon I can give 'em a surprise with that."

"I've got an axe," added Frank.

"So have I, and Job has his harpoon. They can't break in, and if they do we will give them a warm reception."

"Suppose we sit down quietly, as we would under any other circumstances," said Nat, "and not worry until we actually hear them."

This was done, and an hour passed away very pleasantly, Frank reading aloud and the others making an occasional remark concerning the book he read.

They had well-nigh forgotten their cause of alarm, when there suddenly came a pounding at the outer doors, and a voice was heard saying:

"If you are honest men within this ship, open your doors to a poor traveler!"

Nat sprang up, crossed the cabin, ascended the steps, and before letting down the bar, asked:

"How many are you?"

"Two, both whites. Let us in, for the love of heaven; we are well-nigh exhausted."

Nat's friends had gathered below him upon the steps, and he now opened the door, the light from the cabin showing him the forms of two men standing outside.

"Good heavens!" he exclaimed.

"North Pole Nat, as I'm a sinner!" said the foremost of the men.

"Mr. Cartwright!" gasped Nat. "I thought you had perished. This is an unexpected meeting, sir; but you can never tell what may happen in these regions."

CHAPTER XIV.

CARTWRIGHT TELLS HIS STORY.

It was indeed a fact that Cartwright, the mate of the Arctic Fox, stood before Nat and his companions.

"Well, you did get ashore, didn't you?" he asked. "Where is the old man?"

"Drowned."

"Well, I've had a hard blow myself," muttered the man. "You look so comfortable down here; won't you let me in?"

"I could not refuse a dog shelter on such a night as this. Come in, Mr. Cartwright; I won't say 'and welcome,' for that would not be the truth."

"What d'ye mean, lad?" growled the man, turning red in the face.

"I do not need to explain when you shall know the name of this ship, and whose body is outside, all snow and ice."

Cartwright and Jones entered the cabin.

"If you are very cold, you had better not go too near the fires at first, sir," said Nat, warningly; "the change will be too sudden."

Cartwright sat upon a locker against the further side of

the cabin, and kicking off his heavy boots, removed his hood, mittens and thick outer garments, Jones doing the same.

"Hallo, Frank, you're alive, are you? I was sorry they let you go in the boat, and if I'd 've known it, you wouldn't 've. It's all right now, though," giving the lad a peculiar side glance, which the boy understood only too well.

"I have been with friends, sir, and have suffered for nothing," returned the lad, quietly.

"That's more than I can say for them, for of all that were in the vessel, only me and Jones are left. We got caught in the ice, were smashed by an iceberg, and starting on foot across country, half of our party were frozen to death, some died, and the rest—well, I don't know what became of them."

"How did you happen to miss us?" asked Nat.

"The shipkeeper signaled us to come back, as the whale had gone down and night was coming on."

"We were fast, and the whale never sank until after we were obliged to cut loose, the captain having been entangled in the line and drawn overboard."

"We didn't see you, and as the shipkeeper had signaled we went back. After that we kept on for awhile, and then the clouds set in all around us and it began to snow. We hung about all night, and before morning the ice closed in on us so thick that we couldn't get out. Then an iceberg fell on us and stove the ship to pieces."

"Did you look for us in the morning?" asked Job, who did not altogether believe the plausible tale told by the mate.

"Yes, but we had a good deal to look out for ourselves. Wright was dead, and half the men were so badly hurt that they could not work. Some had been killed when the iceberg fell, and some were sick. We got together all our party and encamped on the ice for a day, and then set out to reach shore."

"The sun was hidden and we couldn't tell which way to go, having lost our ship's and boat compasses. We made a start at last, and traveled for several days, the men dropping off one by one from exhaustion and the bitter cold."

"Tom Bunt, stroke oar of Mr. Jones' boat and one or two others of the older seamen were the first to go, and we buried them in the ice so the wolves wouldn't get at them, for they began to annoy us greatly, and hung on our tracks day and night."

"We had managed to save some provisions and three or four casks of water, and we shot a polar bear, so that we were well off for food. We rigged a shelter at night and slept tolerably comfortable, but the terrible weather was picking us off one by one, and we prayed constantly for shelter."

"We were in the worst way for the want of a shelter, and I believe more men died just on that account than there would otherwise. At last, after a week or more of traveling we came upon an Esquimaux village and there we were made comfortable."

"We had plenty to eat and a warm place to sleep at night. I was satisfied to stay there all winter, but the men wanted to push ahead, and so, after staying in the igloos for several days, the Esquimaux furnished us with sledges and dogs, and off we started for the north."

"For the north?" cried Nat. "You surely could not hope to find shelter and friends in the north while the winter lasted?"

"The Esquimaux told us of a ship away up in towards the Pole, in a region where the ice never melts, which had been abandoned and which would afford us a home for the winter. They had seen it, they said, for it had been there many years, and they were sure we would find it a good home. Hence we went north, and after a long search, found the ship, though we did not suppose there would be anybody aboard of her, and above all, so cozily settled."

"You did not know what the vessel was?"

"No."

All four of the comrades exchanged silent glances, and the villain began to feel very uneasy.

"And your journey here, was it a hard one?" asked Nat.

"Yes. What didn't die were either taken prisoners by the treacherous Esquimaux or wandered off, half crazy, and were lost or died from exposure, I don't know which. Ed Lewis, the shipkeeper, was with us, but he strayed away, and I never knew what became of him."

"Finally our dogs ran away with the sledges and provisions and everything, and left us to make the rest of the journey on foot. That was four days ago, and since then we have scarcely tasted food or drink, and when we came across the ship were almost too worn out to climb up the side and knock for admission. The sight of the smoke coming out of them pipes just did our hearts good."

"Chucks, bring out some cold meat and bread, and put on a pot of coffee," said Nat; and as the jolly cook bestirred himself, he continued, addressing Cartwright:

"To such care and attention as you need in your present plight, and which we can give, you have a right, but do not expect more than that. You must be perfectly aware what this ship is; but to be more explicit, I will tell you. She is called the Adventurer."

"Indeed! I suppose you found her logs, or something which gave you that information?"

"Did you ever hear of her before?" asked Job.

"Not that I know of. Was she a whaler?"

"She was an arctic exploring vessel, commanded by one Nathan Evans, of New York—my father. Did you ever know him?"

"I have heard of him," replied Cartwright, carelessly, "but I can't say as I ever had the pleasure of his acquaintance."

"There is no need of you telling any more falsehoods, Mr. Cartwright, for I am aware of the whole truth of this matter," said Nat, firmly. "I know that you were the mate of this vessel, that you abandoned my father and his comrades to a dreadful fate; that you smothered those six sailors in their beds, and—"

"It's a lie!" yelled Cartwright, with a remarkable degree of energy for a starving man, springing from the table. "They smothered themselves. Nat Evans was a fool to go so far north, anyhow, and I warned him more than once."

"I am acquainted with the whole history of the case, sir, and you can tell me nothing. Why you have returned to this ship, I cannot say, unless for shelter, as you affirm. That you can have, but understand plainly, you are here only from sufferance, and because I would not treat you as you treated your old captain. I have some kindness in me, and I wish to see no one suffer. You may stay here until spring, but no later. Whatever you need you shall have, but understand me—I know all your plans! Beware, then, how you seek to carry them out!"

CHAPTER XV.

NAT ON HIS GUARD—A MIDNIGHT VISITOR.

Nat spoke these words quietly but firmly, and the man to whom they were addressed could not but understand their full meaning.

He saw that it would be useless to get mad or bluster, so he said nothing, merely sitting in silence, with his head between his hands.

After the two unwelcome guests had retired, the others enjoyed a hour or so of pleasant conversation and instructive reading, sociability being about as good a tonic as you can have.

The chronometer at last marked ten o'clock, and Nat, arising from his seat, said:

"Bedtime, boys. Be off with you, and if any of you hear any suspicious noises in the night, report to headquarters."

Two hours or so had passed, he did not know exactly how long it was, when he suddenly awoke with a strange feeling upon him.

He had thought he heard a rattling sound, as of someone trying to enter the cabin, and then a noise like the pounding upon the door.

It was not the wind, he was sure of that, for the doors were too firmly fixed to be affected by any but a regular gale, nor was it the howling of the storm outside.

He was now fully awake, and the sound being repeated, he knew that he had not been dreaming.

With a vague foreboding at his heart, he arose hastily, drew on a portion of his clothing, and unlocking the door carefully, crept noiselessly along the main cabin toward the companion-way, taking an ax from his fastenings as he went.

Suddenly, as he crouched in the dim light of the place, for one lamp was always kept burning, he heard a voice just outside the door stationed at the foot of the stairs leading to the deck.

The door was slightly ajar, and peering through he saw the figure of a man at the top of the steps, evidently talking with someone on the outside. The man was Cartwright, the treacherous mate!

"Hist, Ned! The plaguey boy has put a padlock on the door, and I can't let you in."

"You must! I will freeze to death out here!"

The voice was that of Ed Lewis, the shipkeeper of the Arctic Fox, whom Cartwright had reported as dead or missing.

Truly, there was some mystery here, the key to which might unfathom some deep and dangerous plot.

"You're under the lee of the ship, ain't you?"

"Yes."

"And got the sledges and lots of bearskins and a dozen greasy Esquimaux to lie between, haven't you?"

"Yes."

"Then what are you growling about?"

A perfect flood of revelations had been made during the few minutes occupied by that conversation.

The shipkeeper and a dozen Esquimaux outside, with dogs and sledges; Cartwright swearing to kill his own son; some plan on foot to put Ned out of the way. These, and a dozen other things suggested, if not plainly told, the position might well be called a critical one.

Nat determined to put an end to the parley at once.

Throwing open the door, he cried:

"Mr. Cartwright, I think it is about time you went back to bed."

The man was perfectly thunderstruck, for he had no idea but what Ned was fast asleep, dreaming the dreams of the just.

He turned around suddenly and glared at the lad as if he would kill him with a look.

"Hold on, Ned," said the scoundrel. "I've got a young fighting-cock here what I'm going to lick, and then I'll let you in."

He came down the stairs, and Nat retreated, not from fear, but in order to get an advantage over the wretch.

Cartwright came rushing down the stairs and into the cabin, and then Nat, slamming the doors, and standing with his back braced against them, raised his ax in a threatening attitude.

Cartwright made a dash at Nat, but the boy brandished his ax in altogether too careless a fashion to suit him, and he soon got out of the way of its sharp edge.

"Hallo, here, Jones!" he yelled; "come out here and help me tame this young cub; he's getting too frisky to live, and needs lashing."

Quickly unfastening the bar in its place over the door, Nat left his station, and forcing the scoundrel away from the door leading to the steerage, he closed it, and then stood against it.

"Now, my friend, as you won't go for the asking, we shall have to force you," said Nat, determinedly. "Hallo, Job, Frank, Chucks! Come out here!"

Job had already heard the disturbance, and fancying that all was not right, had arisen, and began to dress himself; so when he heard Nat's summons, he hastily completed his arrangements, and came out, followed in half a minute by Frank.

"What's the matter?" he asked.

Nat told him, giving him a full but concise account of the conversation with the man outside, and of Cartwright's refusal to go back to his room.

At this moment Chucks appeared, and took in the scene at a glance.

"Just leave him to me," he said, with a broad grin. "Open the door, Nat, and if that other fellow comes out, brain him."

Nat opened the door and stood ready to floor Jones if he should come out; but the latter, considering discretion the better part of valor, remained in the privacy of his room.

Then Chucks made one sudden dive at the mate, and striking him in the stomach with his bullet head, doubled him up completely, landing him in a helpless mass at the further end of the room.

After accomplishing this much he picked the man up as though he had been a child, and carrying him to his room, dumped him head first in the barrel of water standing in one corner.

Leaving the wretch to extricate himself as best he might, the valiant Chucks then locked the door on the outside, and fastening Jones in as well, gave the keys to Nat.

"Let us hold a council of war," said Nat, sitting down at the table.

"Here is Ed Lewis and a lot of Esquimaux outside, and these two fellows inside. What are we going to do with them? We can't stay cooped up in here all the time, and we have to be assured of our safety if we go abroad. We don't want to feed and lodge a lot of ungrateful dogs who will turn against us at the first opportunity. Cartwright evidently came here expecting to winter aboard this vessel, knowing her position, and knowing also that she had never moved from it since the day he abandoned his kind captain.

"Of course, he did not expect to find us here, and naturally feels disappointed. Being the first tenants, we have the first right to the place. There is room enough for all, and if he wants to stay here and behave himself, he can do so, otherwise he must leave immediately after breakfast.

"Now I want to ask you all, for your own safety, what we had better do—let him stay here on his good behavior, or oblige him to leave at once and never come back? I want to know what you all think, so as to be guided by the best judgment of the whole party, and not merely by my own feelings."

"If he promises to behave himself, and does so, let him stay; if not, he must go. He came here with the Esquimaux, let him go away with them."

This was Job's opinion, and that of the others also.

The party then went to bed, and slept the remainder of the night, arising as usual, but omitting their customary scamper across the ice.

At breakfast both Jones and Cartwright were sullen and silent, saying nothing to anybody, but attending strictly to the business of satisfying their appetites.

"Now," said Nat, breakfast over, "let us come to an understanding. Do you intend to live harmoniously with us, or are we to be constantly on our guard against some new deviltry on your part? Are you going to behave yourselves like men, or like wolves?"

"I shall do just as I please," growled Cartwright.

"So will I," added Jones.

"That is sufficient. There is no room for you on board this ship. You must go at once."

"What! Turn us out to perish?" gasped Cartwright.

"You have forced the alternative upon yourselves, and there can be no appeal."

CHAPTER XVI.

THE SERPENTS DRIVEN OUT.

"You wouldn't drive us out to perish in this horrible place, would you," repeated Cartwright.

"I have answered you. You found your way here, you can easily find the way back."

Nat went to the top of the steps, and removing the fastenings of the doors, looked carefully out.

There was no one to be seen anywhere, nor any signs of the presence of man, save in the footprints upon the newly fallen snow.

He stepped out upon the deck and gazed all about him, but the same solemn stillness which ever reigned there still prevailed.

Then he stepped back into the cabin and said to the two ungrateful guests:

"Now you must leave us; your friends have departed, but I have no doubt you will be able to find them again."

"You're bound we shall go?"

"Yes."

"And I am bound to stay!"

"Indeed? Then we must use force. Job!"

He gave a meaning glance to the harpooner as he spoke, and the two suddenly rushed upon Cartwright, and, despite his struggles, hurried him up the steps, across the deck, and to the rail, whence they dropped him upon a snowbank a few feet below.

Jones, thinking that he could easily overpower the two remaining companions, began to make hostile demonstrations, but Chucks, seizing him around the waist as though he were but an infant carried him upon deck and treated him as his comrade had been served but a moment before.

"There, now," grunted the rotund oarsman, "you're not going to fool with Mr. Chucks."

Then, puffing and blowing, he retreated to the cabin, followed by Job, while Nat remained on deck and watched the two men pick themselves up and walk across the ice toward a towering mass of frozen snow or ice-covered rocks at some little distance off, behind which a number of men might have easily concealed themselves.

There was still sufficient light in the sky, from the aurora, to enable him to distinguish the dark outlines of their figures as the men moved away, and once he saw Cartwright turn and shake his fist at the ship.

He stood and watched them until they disappeared behind the mountain of ice, and then returned to the cabin to inform his friends.

A week passed, and they had begun to forget all about the treacherous mate and his disturbing influence, when one Saturday evening, as they were all seated around the table as they had been upon that other occasion, they heard a pounding upon the outer doors.

They all sprang to their feet, but one thought animating their breasts, and that was that the villains had returned.

Nat went above, and then called out to know who was there.

"Tom Bunt and Bob Carter, seamen, of the bark Arctic Fox, whaler. Is that you, Nat Evans, for heaven's sake?"

"Great goodness!" ejaculated Nat, "it's two more of our old comrades; but they're all right, I know. Are you alone, my men?"

"Yes."

Nat opened the door and admitted his old messmates, who were vastly astonished at everything they saw, being decidedly more so when they learned the whole history of the vessel, and how she happened to be there.

"Then that only goes to show further what a villain this Cartwright is," said the old sailor; and he thereupon related the story of the mate's having abandoned Captain Hathaway, a fact of which the others had been ignorant until this time.

"It'd be a long tale to tell about our wanderin's and livin' with a lot of Esquimaux, but we finally made our way up here, hopin' to find some hut left by former explorers or castaways."

"We found one or two o' those," said Tom, "and managed to live on the food left in them, but the thing that surprised us most was the finding of a regular bed of fossil coal, right in the rocks, and clean down under the ice!"

"A bed of coal?" said Nat, in great surprise.

"To be sure. I'd often heard it said there must be huge beds of fossil coal up this a-way, an', in fact, some folks has found 'em, though not so far up."

"It ain't so strange, anyway," interrupted Bob, "when you find volcanoes right in the very middle of snow and ice, spitting fire and lava, an' all that sort o' stuff, and why shouldn't you find a bed o' coal?"

"At any rate we did find it," protested Tom, "and it ain't more'n a day's journey from here. It was kind o' funny, our findin' it, and if you don't mind, I'll tell ye about it."

"I should indeed be glad to hear about this wonderful discovery," spoke up Nat, "and so would all of us; but are you not hungry? Your diet must have been frugal, to say the least, during your travels in these frozen regions."

"Now about the coal bed," said Nat, after the two men had eaten. "I'm eager to hear about it, for that is a matter which interests us all. We don't know how soon we may have to draw upon it."

"All right, Nat, I'll proceed. The other day, as me and Bob was walkin' along, thumpin' the ice with our sticks, which were nothing but the shafts of two oars which Bob had floated on the night his boat was stove, I struck through into something hard, just like a rock, it might be, an' I says:

"'Bob, this here's a rock, an' we're onto solid land.'"

"He stuck his stick down, an' sure enough he broke through the ice, and there was the rocks."

"We knowed we'd made a big discovery, and we pounded away on that ice till we'd cleared away a space big enough for both on us to stand on."

"We felt kind o' like as if we'd found the North Pole findin' them rocks right there in the middle of all that ice, an' I says to Bob:

"'We ought to have North Pole Nat here,' said I; 'for if we ain't found the Pole, we've got the rocks to plant it in.'"

"With that we both laughed, and then we went on for quite a piece, Bob considerable ahead of me, 'cause he war the spryer man o' the two."

"Suddenly I see him slip up and go slidin' down a sort o' slide like at the rate o' forty miles a minute, his feet and hands a-stickin' up, and him on the flat of his back like a turtle."

"I rushed ahead, and arter a while came to a place where there was a decided slope, and at the other end a hole like the mouth of a cave."

"I was bound to know what had become of my mate, so I just squatted down on my hunkies like a jackrabbit, an' slid down that slope and into the cave like greased lightnin'.

"I slid a long ways, but finally I brung up in the dark ag'in a solid mass of something arter I'd gone a good quarter mile, it seemed to me.

"Are ye here anywheres, Bob?" I hollered, and he answered me right away, and axed me if I had a match.

"I didn't have that, but I had what was just as good—a flint and steel; and so taking a bit of old neckacher, I soused it with oil, and we soon had a bright light.

"Then we seed as we was in a cave of rocks and ice, and at the bottom of it was a lot of black stuff, which it didn't take us very long to find out was soft coal.

"There was piles an' piles o' it, an' the place was quite warm like, no ice or snow at the bottom, but on'y the coal, so we was able to knock off several chunks, an' pilin' 'em on the rocks to one side, we soon had as pretty a fire as ever you seed.

"You can bet that coal fire done us a heap o' good, for we knowed that if we couldn't find any more houses or anything that we could come back there an' have all the fire we wanted.

"We stayed around there all night and cooked some of our dried meat, and then started out again, and to-night or to-day, whichever it is, we found you."

"That is an important discovery," remarked Nat; "and I propose that as there are now six of us, some of us go off on an expedition with drags, shovels, and picks, and get as much of the coal as we can bring away. Two or three such trips will give us all the coal we shall want for some time to come."

CHAPTER XVII.

THE EXPEDITION TO THE COAL BEDS.

Nat's proposition was received with every demonstration of approval, and the rest of the evening was spent in discussing the means for carrying it out.

Ten o'clock came much sooner than anyone expected, and although they would have liked to talk the matter over all night, Nat sent them all off to bed and promised to renew the discussion the next day, for although a constant darkness reigned, relieved only by the brilliancy of the northern lights, the time was divided up the same as it would have been had they been in more southern latitudes.

Tom Bunt and Bob were found to be valuable acquisitions to the party, as they were not only full in harmony with the arrangements instituted by Nat, but when any work was to be done, their stout arms were always to be relied upon, and never a grumble nor a growl was heard from their lips from one day's end to another.

Three or four days intervined before the expedition was ready to start, and this time was occupied in making drags or sledges upon which to transport the coal from the bed to the ship.

At last the party were ready to start, two stout drags with high sides having been made, with stout ropes to pull them along by, there being no dogs that could be pressed into the service.

It was not deemed expedient to abandon the ship entirely, as the fires would have to be kept up, and as Frank was less strong and able to bear fatigue than any of the rest, he was to remain behind.

Consequently, one morning after breakfast, behold him standing well up forward, upon the vessel's deck, watching his companions as they go away dragging the sledges behind them, laden with shovels, picks, logs of wood for building fires, extra furs for protection at night, and other necessities, including food and water.

Frank stood and watched them out of sight, a certain ex-

pression of sadness stealing into his handsome face, notwithstanding his natural cheerfulness.

By aid of their boat compasses and 'the recollection of the seamen, the party succeeded in finding the cave at the end of a tramp of about seventeen hours.

They calculated that it would take them about as long to return, for though they had a better idea of the direction now than they had before, the weight of the coal would be considerable, and the drawing it would consume the extra time gained in returning by a more direct route.

They agreed to take a long rest of five or six hours before getting to work, having been so long on the march; so after cooking and eating a hearty supper, they encamped within the cave, covering themselves up warmly and sleeping almost as soundly as though they were aboard the ship.

At the end of six hours Nat awoke and arousing his companions, they lit half a dozen torches and set them around the cavern, beginning to work in good earnest.

The picks flew, and the big lumps of soft coal were turned up and shoveled away by Chucks and Nat, who, after a little, took up picks and gave the shovels to Tom and Job, they changing off with Chucks and Bob who in turn were relieved by Nat and Job.

As the coal was shoveled away it was piled upon one of the sledges, and when a sufficient load was made, all hands took hold and drew it up the incline to the outside, where it was thrown upon the other sledge.

They worked steadily for about four hours, during which time a considerable amount of the precious deposit had been mined, after which they took a rest for an hour or so, in order not to become too much fatigued, for despite the ease with which the coal was gotten out, it was tiresome work nevertheless.

After a couple of hours' rest the gang put in another four hours' work, and then knocked off for the day, having filled one of the sledges and covered the bottom of the other.

Then the fire was replenished, and after supper and several hours' chat, they went to sleep for eight hours, completing the filling of the other sledge after breakfast.

It will not be necessary to speak of the return, save to say that it took them longer than they supposed it would, the journey occupying twenty-four hours, several long halts having to be made upon the way.

At last they reached the ship, and Nat shouted out to Frank to tell him that they had got back, thinking it strange that the boy was not on the lookout for them, although it was past midnight.

He clambered upon the deck, when the first thing that met his gaze was the cabin doors standing wide open.

Filled with a vague apprehension that all was not right, he rushed down into the cabin and found it empty and in a state of confusion.

Worse than that, Frank was missing!

There was no trace of him to be seen, except, perhaps, the general neatness of everything, save a certain confused look in the cabin, that denoted too plainly that he had been carried away by force.

"Someone has come during our absence," said Nat, "and carried him away. Oh, why did we leave him here? I might have suspected that those villains would be watching for just such a chance, and in our absence may have improved their opportunity."

"The clocks are both going yet," said Chucks, "so it can't be very long since he went away."

"See if they are nearly run down, or if they have been recently wound up," said Nat.

Job made an investigation, and ascertained as nearly as

he could calculate, that they had been wound the evening before.

"Come here!" cried old Tom, in excitement, from without. "See what I've found in a corner!"

Nat went into the cabin and found the old tar holding up a mitten, a white bearskin mitten of considerable size.

"That 'ere mitten belongs to one o' them bloody raw meat eaters," said Bob Carter. "None on us has 'em, an' I know nuther Cartwright nor Jones nor Ned Lewis nor any o' them had sich. They was all seal or brown bear, or beaver or sich like."

"Then the Esquimaux carried him off, confound their greasy hides!" ejaculated Nat, emphatically.

Just then Job's voice was heard calling to them from outside, and they all went out.

"I've found the trail of the miserable vagabonds right in the fresh snow," he said. "I know they is Esquimaux by their feet, an' you can tell Frank's little feet from the others."

"What's this?" cried Nat, suddenly, as he leaped down upon the ice.

The object that had caught his attention was a bit of white fur that had caught upon a long icicle which depended from the ship's rail.

"That came off of Frank's greatcoat, the one the old man used to wear," remarked Chucks.

"I remember now that I did not see it hanging upon the nail in the cabin where he usually keeps it," observed our hero.

"The poor little fellow will be comfortable at all events," said Job, "for that white coat was as warm as an oven. I've got an idea."

"What is it?" asked the rest, in chorus.

"There's a bright aurora up there, and that's all the light we want. Anyhow, we can take torches. Suppose we wind up the clocks, fix the rest so they'll last a day at least, shut up the house, and go off to look for Frank?"

"But the scoundrels have sledges," said Frank.

"That's all right. They may have halted somewhere to take a snooze. Perhaps they ain't more than three or four hours ahead of us; we can't tell."

"You're right, and you give me fresh courage. Back to the ship, every man, and haste our preparations!"

Everything was done that could be, and Nat locked the cabin doors and closed the outside one as well as he could, so that the snow would not be driven in by the wind, after which the party set out.

Chucks had his bomb-gun and box of bombs. Job was provided with his trusty harpoon, and the rest had axes and sheath knives.

The sledges of coal were left where they had been drawn, under the lee of the vessel, and then by the light of their torches they started off upon the trail of their beloved friend and messmate.

The trail was still fresh, and they followed it with rapidity, the excitement adding speed to their feet and strength to their limbs.

They had not neglected to provide themselves severally with a quantity of such food as could be put in the smallest compass and would afford the most nourishment, pemmican supplying both of these requisites.

This, with a dozen cakes of hardtack each, would enable them to subsist for two days at least, and in case they met with any game, which they did not think likely, however, they could easily supply themselves with still more provisions.

They traveled until midnight, the track being still quite plain, but in case of its being obliterated before they would want to return, Nat had taken the precaution to bring a com-

pass with him, which he consulted every hour or so, in order to keep his bearings.

The cold was not nearly as intense as it had been, and the temperature was really quite endurable, there being very little wind and no snow, nor any signs of there being a fall for the present.

The air was just bracing enough to be pleasant, and to make exercise invigorating, and not one of the party complained of the cold, all being in the best of spirits, although of course anxious to find the object of their search.

"The ice is getting rough," remarked Job, "and the sledges can't go over it so easy. The skunks have had to get out and walk, so as to ease up on the dogs."

"God grant it may never get any smoother, then, till we come up with the wretches!"

Such was Nat's fervent ejaculation, and everyone wished the same, as they pressed forward, the ice as yet being none too rough to walk over.

An hour, two, three, four, passed, and the path had not mended, being, if anything, more uneven than before, and Nat was set to thinking by the circumstance.

"Hark a bit!" cried Chucks, "there's something going on ahead of us, and if it ain't behind yon mountain of ice, then I'm mistaken."

There was certainly the sound of human voices to be heard, and voices, too, that spoke English, for several words could be heard very plainly.

"Who can it be?" said Job. "They're fighting, whoever they are, and most likely with the pesky Esquimaux."

"They're white men," said Nat, quickly, "and we are bound to go to their assistance, whoever they may be. Shout, boys, shout, that they may know that friends are at hand."

All hands set up a tremendous shouting and Chucks fired off one of his bombs in the air, to let the Esquimaux know that the dreaded "fire-sticks" of the white men were coming.

There was an answering shout from the beleaguered party, whom our friends could not see as yet, and then a tremendous howl of dismay, which could have come from none but the throats of the Inuits.

With nerves excited to the highest pitch, the little party pushed forward, and soon the path became smooth and hard again, so that the most rapid progress possible could be made.

The mountains of ice of which Chucks had seen were presently reached and rounded, and then the party came upon an exciting scene.

Some three or four white men were engaged in defending themselves against a score of dirty, degraded-looking Esquimaux, while not far away, close to a collection of snow huts or igloos, were two or three packs of snarling dogs, fighting and howling and mixing themselves up most inextricably.

"Courage, my friends," yelled Nat, and then he and his whole party hurled themselves upon the enemy, cutting right and left, and dealing anything but love pats upon the thick skulls of the wretched Mongolians, for to that race these creatures belong, and not to the Indian, as is supposed by many.

The enemy, seeing such a sudden acquisition to the ranks of their would-be-victims, and not knowing how many more there might be, fled in dismay, not to their huts, but across the ice, taking their dogs and sledges with them.

In a few moments the spot was deserted, except by the party of whites and their rescuers, and then Nat advanced toward him who seemed to be the leader, being the tallest and stoutest.

As he stepped forward the man turned his face toward him, causing our hero to start back in the greatest astonishment.

"Mr. Cartwright!" he gasped. "It seems we are fated to meet at the most unexpected places and times."

"North Pole Nat again, as I live and breathe!" exclaimed Cartwright, for it was indeed he. "Here we are again, Jones and Ned Lewis and Dick Rudd, one of our old seamen."

"My arrival was most opportune, it seems."

"Yes, and I am obliged to ye, though you did treat me like a dog and turn me away from the ship."

"Let us not speak of that, sir; there are matters of more importance just now. You brought your harsh treatment upon yourself by your declining to submit to our rules and by your treachery."

"Perhaps I was too eager to get things under my own control, but I'm sorry for it, and I don't bear you or your chums any ill-will for what you did. Me and my friends have been living in those huts since I saw ye last, and generally we got along."

"Those Esquimaux, then, were not the same ones who were with you when you came to the ship?"

"No, they have gone away, but are coming back. They are all right, but these fellows are a new lot and are bad."

"Let me ask you, sir, and you cannot blame me for still suspecting your sincerity, what you have done with Frank?"

The man's surprise was not assumed, but perfectly genuine, as he repeated:

"What have I done with Frank?"

"Yes; he is missing from the ship, and we have come to hunt for him. Where is he?"

"My God, Nat, I swear to you that I haven't seen him since the day we left the Adventurer. I'll take my oath on that," and he spoke so earnestly that there could be no doubting the truth of his words, even when one knew what a villain he was.

"You are his father," said Nat. "He told us so himself."

"He wasn't, for all that," returned the man; "though he thought he was. I tell you he was no son of mine."

"But he lived with you, and considered you his father?"

"True enough, and I'll explain. My mates here knowed nothing of all this, for to them the boy was only Frank Trafton, a lad I'd brought aboard."

"That's all he was," remarked Jones.

"The boy was brought up as my own child," continued the mate, "and I never said anything to him which would make him think he wasn't. The truth of the matter was, that I lost my own children, a boy and a girl, twins, when they were little, and I took two more, twins just like mine, to bring up."

"Their own mother died after they did, and I felt so lonesome that I wanted somebody to look after, and so took the young ones, as I say, moving to another part of the country, so as nobody would know the difference."

"The youngsters grew up, and I named them Frank and Charlotte, just as my own had been named. When I came to go with Captain Hathaway, I told Frank he'd better go as cabin-boy."

"I called him Frank Trafton, and that's his name, his own name. The girl died during my voyage to the North Pole, for, as you seem to know all about it, I don't see no use in denyin' it."

"I did abandon Evans, but it was only for my own safety. As far as killing those six men goes, I didn't do it, though I know who did put the charcoal in the stove, but he's dead, now, and they ain't no gettin' at him."

"As I said, Frank's real name was Trafton, though he thought it was his middle name. His folks had died before I took him and his sister from the foundling hospital. He was not to be known as my son, because I had a plan in view when I shipped him on the Arctic Fox."

"Which plan was that he should kill me," said Nat, excitedly. "You might as well complete your confession."

CHAPTER XVIII.

MORE ABOUT FRANK.

Cartwright did not appear at all abashed by Nat's abrupt speech, but went on in the same careless manner:

"I don't see as there is any reason to deny it, for that's just exactly what I did put him up to, for reasons of my own."

"You might have made clean breast of the whole matter, sir," interrupted Nat. "I know you and your whole history. Frank has told me, and the log-book of my father, Nathan Alonzo Evans, has revealed to me the whole narrative of your baseness."

"Well, suppose it has?"

"You ought to know that I am perfectly aware of your treachery to my father, and your fears that I might some day learn of this are the motive for your wanting to get rid of me. By falsehoods and misrepresentations you inflamed the boy against me, though, fortunately, his own true nature was proof against your wiles."

"I don't understand."

"I do, and so does Frank. His own good heart told him that I was not the monster you would have had him believe me; that my father was innocent of the charges you brought against him, or, at least, if he was not, that it was not right to punish me for what he may have done. The log-book set him right at last, and he denounced you with all the impetuosity of his nature."

"H'm! You think a good deal of the young one."

"I do."

"Let me tell you, then, that he has kept the great secret of his life from you, and that you don't know him half so well as you think. He has been deceiving you all the time, and some day you'll find it out."

"Let us be off at once, my friends," said Nat. "These villains cannot be far ahead of us now."

"Won't you wait and stay with us?" asked Jones. "Our huts lead away down under the ice where it's warm, and we've lots of furs to sleep on and plenty to eat."

"No; we must push on."

Away over the snow and ice went the little party of rescuers, their hearts animated with the highest hopes, and their pulses beating with excitement.

On and on they went through the night, the task seeming almost hopeless; but, in spite of all that, keeping up their courage and never once faltering on the way.

At last, worn out by almost ceaseless travel, they were obliged to take a halt at the end of the second day after leaving Cartwright, and under the lee of an icy bluff they sank exhausted.

Their food was nearly gone, and they had not found any game. The journey back would have to be made without food and in an exhausted condition, the end of which would be easily foreseen—death!

The snow was now beginning to fall heavily, the wind whirling it about in great drifts, and utterly obliterating the track made by the Esquimaux.

Their case seemed utterly without hope, but Nat would not despair, and crawling closer to the sheltering base, he divided his last remnant of food among his companions, and then putting the hood of his jacket over his face, he lay down and let the snow drift over him like a blanket.

Chucks was the first one to awake, and after thrusting his head through the snow, he gazed with surprise at the tent over his head, and then aroused his companions.

They made such a stir and bustle in getting out that they shook the drift down upon themselves and then had to be dug

out once more, and there was a great deal of sport and laughter over it, until at last they all scrambled out and took a run over the snow, which had already frozen hard, the crust being firm enough to walk on.

"What shall we do now?" asked Job.

"Push on! The Esquimaux have been delayed by the storm, and we may yet overtake them."

For several hours they continued their way over the hardened snow, Nat chatting merrily to keep up their spirits, though, Heaven knows, his own were at a low enough ebb when Chucks, who usually proved to be the discoverer of the party, yelled out:

"Look! Look! There is a whole gang of Esquimaux, and they are coming toward us!"

It needed but a second glance to convince them all the rosy fellow was right.

The devoted companions in joy and sorrow, in sadness and happiness, stood close to one another, their weapons grasped firmly, while with a rush and a whirl the savage horde swept down upon them like the wind, as sudden and as swift.

Nearer still they come, and now Nat sees that the sledges are full, and the men are all armed with spears, and look very ferocious.

Still nearer came the sledges, and now one darts off upon one side, while a white-robed figure rises to its full height and cries out:

"Hurrah, my lads! I am glad to see you! Stop your horses, my friend, or rather your dogs."

Can it be possible that figure in white is he whom they have sought so earnestly?

Frank?

"Yes, it is no one else. It is the cabin-boy—the genial, merry Frank himself.

The sledge comes to a halt at last, and Frank, leaping out, runs swiftly to Nat and hugs him—envelops him completely in the flaps of the great white coat, and laughs and cries alternately.

"God bless you, Nat! Here I am once more!" cries Frank, joyously, "and here are all of you! Did you miss me? Have you been looking for me long? Are you frightened?"

"Stop, stop, my boy!" cried Nat, with a laugh. "You ask me too many questions at once. I can't answer as fast as that."

"But you missed me?"

"Indeed we did, and would have dared anything for your sake."

"Well, here I am, and these fat fellows are going to take you and me and all of us back to the ship. I can't understand their lingo very well, but they're going to do it."

"This isn't a lark, is it, Frank?" asked Nat, gravely.

"What isn't a lark?"

"Your being taken away and frightening us all so?"

"No, indeed. I was carried away in good earnest."

"Did they not mean to bring you back?"

"Not until I——"

"Well?"

"Oh, I can't tell you now, but it was really no joke, and the dirty wretches did mean to keep me forever. They have changed their minds, though, and now we're going home—back to the ship. Jump in."

It was very evident from the actions of the Esquimaux that they intended to take Nat and his companions back to the ship, and so, without further ado, they all got into the sledges, the long whips of deerskin were snapped, the snarling little white dogs, looking like foxes and each guided by a separate rein, leaped forward, and away went the whole party, getting over the smooth, white path with the literal speed of the wind.

Frank and Nat were cuddled together in the bottom of the same sledge, and presently Nat said:

"You are not the child of Cartwright."

"Thank God!"

Nothing could exceed the fervency with which these words were spoken, and even then they but faintly mirrored the depths of thankfulness which the lad felt on hearing the wonderful piece of news.

"You are Frank Trafton and no one else," said Nat, and then he gave Frank an account of all that had happened since they had seen him last, from the time when they started for the coal beds until they had met him among the Esquimaux.

It is not necessary to describe the journey back to the ship, it being enough to say that it was accomplished in a very much shorter time than could have been done without the sledges.

The fires were out and the chronometer run down, but for all that they were home again, and never had the sight of the well-known figure of the frozen sentinel upon the bowsprit awakened such feelings of gratitude as it did now.

Frank parted kindly with the Esquimaux, making them understand that he was very grateful to them, and that when the ice broke up in the spring, if it ever did break up, that they were all going to the Pole.

Nat made the greasy fellows a few trifling presents, and then they made off, dogs, sledges and all, leaving our friends to their icebound home and the enjoyment of each other's society.

CHAPTER XIX.

THE RIGORS OF WINTER.

There were one or two more expeditions to the coal beds after that, Nat thinking it best to be well supplied before the extreme cold of December and January should set in.

December had now set in, the day of Nat's return being the sixth of the month, and the weather already had undergone a material change.

The thermometer outside the cabin door frequently went as low as sixty degrees below zero, and Chucks insisted the smoke from the chimneys froze so solid some mornings that it took him longer than usual to get the breakfast.

It was too cold to work outside as yet, but Nat made a work shop in the waist of the ship, and he and his companions constructed two canvas boats, light and strong, the keels, ribs, gunwales, and thwarts being of wood and the rest of canvas.

This was made thoroughly waterproof by various applications of oil, there being a goodly quantity in the stores.

Christmas was approaching, and indeed by the time the boats were finished and supplied with masts, sails, and oars, it was the 24th of December, and all hands set about celebrating the day in good old-fashioned style, no matter if they were separated from all the world.

Christmas, 1869, came on a Saturday, as you will see by referring to your almanacs, and it was decided to give up both Saturday and Sunday to the celebration.

Such another Christmas celebration was certainly never had, we honestly believe, and the good old Saint Nicholas was doubtless as much pleased as he had ever been in his life, when he looked in upon the merrymakers that Christmas Eve and saw how finely things were progressing.

The dinner designed, executed, and superintended by Chucks, with considerable assistance from Frank, who worked with all a woman's deftness, was an entire and unequivocal success, and from the chicken soup to the plum pudding and black coffee was done full justice to.

As an addition to the feast, being an extra occasion, Chucks proposed to bring out a bottle of some particularly fine wine,

which he got a glimpse of a few days previous, and as no one objected, off he went, little expecting what he was destined to find.

Nat and the others sat sipping their coffee while he was gone, and in the excitement of agreeable conversation, they forgot all about Chucks and the wine, seeming to be unaware that he had gone fully half an hour, when five minutes ought to have sufficed for the commission of his errand.

At last Job seemed to become conscious of his mate's absence, and looking at the clock, remarked:

"Well, I'm blown. Chucks ain't got back yet. Wonder if he has drunk the whole bottle himself, and ain't able to get here?"

"Oh, no, Chucks isn't that sort of a boy," said Nat; "but I say, how long has he been gone?"

"Two or three hours, I reckon," answered Job, with a laugh.

"Half an hour exactly," said Frank. "Perhaps he has fallen and hurt himself. Let's go and look for him."

They all arose to carry out the boy's suggestion, when at the very moment who should appear but Chucks himself, a bottle of wine in one hand and in the other a canvas bag.

This latter he now threw upon the table with a thud and a chink that set the glasses and dishes rattling.

"What have you got there, Chucks?" asked Nat, strangely interested.

"Open it; you're the captain, and you're the one what's got to show these fellows something, though I know what it is myself, as I couldn't help it, being on a tour of inspection."

There was a cord tied around the mouth of the bag, and this Nat unwound, and spreading aside the cloth, disclosed to the astonished eyes of all a mass of glittering gold coins.

"This is a part of the ship's treasure," he said. "Don't you remember the narrative I read spoke about its being concealed somewhere aboard? I really had forgotten all about it."

"So had I," said Chucks, "until I happened to kick one of the bags while looking for the wine. The chink it gave out set me to thinking and I remembered what the log said."

Not one of the happy family was filled with the spirit of avarice upon seeing the gold, and knowing that there was more in the ship, for Nat reasoned that the money was left in trust to him to prosecute the search for the Pole, and the others agreed that it was his, having been his father's, and that, therefore, they had no claim on it.

Nat determined that if his intended expedition in the spring failed of its purpose he would return, build or charter another vessel, using this money for the purpose, and being provided with all modern appliances and conveniences, devote himself thoroughly to the noble work in which his father lost his life, and carry it out until assured of success or convinced that his task was, indeed, impossible of achievement.

Not so the villainous mate and his associates. They knew well that there was treasure aboard the Adventurer, and they determined to possess it; not to carry out the same glorious purpose which animated Nat, but to enrich themselves.

A thorough search was made in the morning, and the treasure was found in its entirety, though considerable work was required before it could be removed to the cabin.

Captain Evans's motive in taking such a large amount of money with him—Nat estimated that there was not less than sixty thousand dollars, and perhaps more—was not at all clear, but, at all events, here the money was, and it must be taken care of, to be used in the future.

It was put under lock and key, Nat first insisting that each of his companions should put a hundred dollars in his belt, and always keep it with him.

A word concerning Cartwright and his chances for passing the winter in safety among these most desolate regions be-

yond the pale of civilization, and utterly separated from the world, from congenial companions, and more than that, a place where animal and vegetable life were wanting, a land of never ending snow.

His intention was to follow Nat to the Pole, if he went as far as that, and snatch the victory from him; then, returning to plunder the ship, and give the Esquimaux license to take whatever their fancy dictated.

It was upon March 10, 1870, according to Job's calendar, that, their preparations having been completed, the boats, provisions, nautical instruments, clothing, weapons, and supplies of all kinds having been put upon the sledges, for here were the Esquimaux, agreeable to promise, ready to take them as far north as they wished to go; it was upon the tenth day of March, 1870, we repeat that Nat, locking the cabin-door upon the outside, having made the proper arrangements, gave the word to start.

CHAPTER XX.

THE BOATS ARE LAUNCHED.

Over the ice and snow, speeding like the wind across the glittering expanse, went the sledges, whips cracking, dogs barking, Esquimaux shouting, and everything and everybody in the highest spirits.

The ship is left behind, the silent sentinel still on guard, as he has been all these years, the snow and ice showing no signs of releasing from their firm grasp the proud vessel which once plowed the seas like a thing of life.

A hundred miles have been rolled behind the swift sledges, and ten more on top of them, and now the guides say they can smell the sea, can hear its roar, can see the drift ice, and feel a difference in the air, but Nat does not hear, feel, see or smell anything but what he has already done for the last hundred miles; there is no difference for him.

Frequent halts were made, of course, during the journey, and it was during one of these soon after Nat's research, that he asked Job to take an observation, the sun being in good condition for that operation.

The sturdy harpooner did so, and after figuring for a few moments, said:

"We're in north latitude 87 degrees 49 minutes, and west longitude about 69 degrees, 36 minutes, though I ain't so particular about that. It's the latitude I want."

"And the more the better," said Chucks. "The nearer you get to ninety the better."

"Perhaps we won't reach the sea on this parallel," said Nat. "Many explorers go up from the Pacific, but my father always insisted that the proper way was through Baffin's Bay, Smith's Sound, Kane Bay, Lincoln Sea, and so on, running as nearly as possible on the seventieth parallel of west longitude."

"That unlucky ice belt stopped him," remarked Job.

Twenty miles more traversed, and then, to Nat's unspeakable delight, there began to be signs of a general breaking-up of the ice, as though its limit had been reached, and the sea must soon appear.

Deep fissures were met with at the bottom of which, far below, could be heard the rush of waters, and at least these grew more frequent and were not so deep; then channels were found between the floes in which the water was quite deep and not unpleasantly cold.

The streams running through the ice grew wider and wider and more numerous, and at last Nat proposed, as a measure of safety for the Esquimaux, that he and his companions launch their boats, and leave the natives to make their way to the mainland, which he was sure existed.

The preparations for the launch were at once begun, Nat

explaining to the Esquimaux that they were to wait for him and his comrades if expedient.

Eight hours after the launching of the boats Nat sat in the stern sheets of the forward craft, steering, while Frank, wrapped in his greatcoat, was fast asleep, Job seeming ready to follow his example.

The other boat was not far behind, Tom steering and Chucks pulling occasionally, more for the sake of keeping awake than of doing any particular good by rowing.

When Frank and Job awoke, they were surprised to find the boats in an open sea.

The boats made a good five knots, the breeze being just right for craft of their size to send along in, and Nat's heart fairly danced as he thought of the glorious victory almost achieved, the prize almost won, the battle nearly finished.

Job took an observation upon the second day of their embarking fairly on the Polar Sea, and both he and Nat made their position out as in north latitude 88 degrees and 30 minutes, or within one-and-one-half degrees of the Pole itself.

Soon after the record had been made, Chucks, who had all along until recently been noted as a discoverer, suddenly startled everybody by jumping up, putting his telescope to his eye, and, after a pause, shouting out:

"Land, ho!"

The others gazed intently toward the point indicated, and Job, taking the glass, said with an air of conviction: "He's right; there is land, and plenty of it."

CHAPTER XXI.

ON LAND ONCE MORE.

Nat ran the Stars and Stripes up to the top of the mast, and all hands gave a rousing cheer as the beautiful emblem fluttered for the first time over this unknown sea.

As the land came nearer it was seen to consist of black rocks, with here and there a patch of snow ice, and an occasional peak or mound higher than the surrounding coast.

At last they sighted a little cove, which they made for.

The boats shot into the little harbor, the sail were furled, the oars drawn in, and the little anchor or grapnel thrown out, and then our hero sprang from the bow of his boat into the shallow water, and rushing upon the rocks, waved the starry banner proudly and shouted in a loud voice:

"In the name of the United States of America I take possession of the Polar Continent, and declare it to be government territory, now and forever!"

When all had landed, the boats were drawn up close to the rocks and a portion of the provisions, one keg of water, an extra coat or so, and the quadrant, were taken out.

Then the little crafts which had brought the daring explorers to this solitary place were allowed to drift to the end of their warps, so that there should be no danger of their canvas sides scraping upon the sharp rocks.

The return voyage must be made, and, therefore, it was absolutely essential that no harm should come to the boats, for they could not be replaced.

The party next advanced into the interior, if it could be so called, coming before long to the mouth of a large cave whence flowed a wide and noisy stream of ice-cold water.

They next mounted up to the top of what looked like a large mound surrounded by rocks.

"I say," said Chucks, taking out a pocket compass, "what direction would you say this land was in?"

"South."

"If we're on the Pole it's all south," he answered, with a laugh; "how can it be anything else? Look at this needle, will you, it wants to stand on its head."

As Nat stepped toward Chucks to observe the phenomenon

and see what might have caused it, Frank suddenly seized him by the hand and said, in a terribly excited whisper:

"Look there! There are other discoverers upon this land besides ourselves!"

Nat's sudden halt caused Chucks to start, and this made him slip, when, in attempting to regain his balance, he lost the compass, and it went rolling down the rocks, shattered to pieces.

Nat looked and saw that Frank was right, that there were other explorers upon these rocky shores besides themselves.

Three boats were seen floating in a little cove about half a mile off, and a party of men were landing, or had already done so.

"We're first here, anyhow," said Bob. "By jinks, gimme that glass," and he took the telescope from Job's hand, saying, after a long look:

"It's Cartwright and his gang as sure as I'm a sinner."

"I knew it!" said Nat. "I felt that we should meet again."

"Let us leave this place before they observe us," said Frank, and at his suggestion they climbed down the rocks, and thus pursued their explorations unseen by the enemy.

An hour or so afterwards they suddenly emerged from a kind of rocky pass upon an elevated ledge or plateau, whence a good view of the sea could be obtained, and here they came face to face with Cartwright, Lewis, Jones, Rudd, and half a dozen Esquimaux.

"So-ho, you have got here, have you?" said the mate, with a sneer. "I thought to get here first, but your boats sail better than mine though they are not so strong."

He said those last words, with such an emphasis that Nat was convinced that he meant to do some damage to their boats, and he determined to go to them at once.

Saying nothing to the others, he took Frank's hand, and turning around retraced his steps, followed by Job and his friends.

Half an hour later they reached the cove where the boats had been left.

To their horror they discovered that a long gash had been made in the canvas bottom of one of them with a knife, and that the water had already half filled it.

"Whoever done this cowardly act," said Nat, passionately, "had better look to heaven for protection, for as I live I will kill him at the first chance."

As he spoke the boat foundered, taking with it provisions, water, the only other quadrant they possessed and other things of inestimable value in such a place.

"May the will of God be done," murmured Nat, as he buried his face in his hands, Frank trying vainly to comfort him.

CHAPTER XXII.

THE PUNISHMENT OF TREACHERY.

Nat succeeded in composing himself after a while, and then said calmly:

"What has happened cannot be helped now, so let us not complain. It is nearly noon, and I think we had better go to yonder light and take an observation. The ascertaining of our true position is now the one thing of importance.

Leaving Tom to guard the other boat and give an alarm in case any attempt was made to destroy it, Nat proceeded in the direction of the light he had pointed out, followed by his comrades.

The distance was greater than he supposed, and when they halted upon the crest of a pile of black rocks, from which an almost uninterrupted view of the sea and this newly found continent could be obtained, they were pretty well tired out.

They sat down and rested for some time, chatting gayly the while, and never alluding to the dark side of the picture.

At last Nat arose and called to Job to bring him the quadrant as he was ready to take an observation and determine their true position.

After adjusting the instrument and fixing the different sights in their proper position, Nat held it firmly to his eye and began his work.

When he had marked upon the dial at his side the correct figures, he began to work out the problem, saying excitedly:

"By jove! if this isn't the North Pole itself, then I'm out. Let me see," and he rapidly worked the sum out in his head, crying at last:

"Yes, sir, it's just nine——"

A strange sound broke the stillness of that desolate place. The sound was the report of a pistol.

The bullet struck the instrument and knocked it, shattered, from Nat's hands, whence, falling down the jagged rocks, it was literally broken to pieces.

"There is but one man who would do such a fiendish act! Ah, there he is at this very moment, endeavoring to escape! Upon him, my men, and punish him as he deserves!" exclaimed Nat.

Cartwright was seen dashing down the slope, followed by Jones, Lewis, and the rest, and Nat at once gave chase.

Chucks threw up his big gun to his shoulder, having previously put in a bomb, and a thundering report followed.

The swift messenger of death flew straight to its mark, and had not the treacherous mate slipped as he ran, and fallen to the ground, the missile would have caused his death.

It passed over his head, however, and striking a rock, exploded, injuring Lewis seriously, and hurting the others somewhat, the flying particles striking them in their faces.

Bob Carter was just ahead of Chucks when he discharged the gun, and seeing that the shot had failed, seized the weapon and loaded it with the last bomb that the jolly oarsman possessed. Then he strode rapidly forward, moving in an oblique angle to the direction taken by Nat and his companions.

Cartwright had himself left his party, and they were about to scatter when Job came up with Jones and struck him to the earth with his fist.

"Who cut our boat?" demanded Job of Jones.

"I don't know."

"You lie!" said the harpooner, seizing him by the throat and shaking him. "You did it yourself. Take that!"

A stunning kick sent the man flying down the rocks in a most undignified heap, while a yell, as he reached the bottom, gave evidence of his bodily pain.

Suddenly a tremendous report was heard, and then a cry of agony so terrible that everyone was forced from very fear to hold his breath.

Nat and Job sprang forward, and as they reached the rocks around which Bob had disappeared, they saw a terrible sight.

The body of Cartwright, literally torn to pieces, lay upon the rocks, while close at hand Bob Carter was engaged in a desperate struggle with Dick Rudd and two or three Esquimaux.

Dick Rudd had at that moment succeeded in breaking down Bob's guard, and, rushing in, had clinched with him, the gleam of a savage-looking knife being momentarily seen.

They were near the edge of a precipice, and before Nat could come to the assistance of the sailor, both he and his enemy had plunged headlong down the awful abyss, still clinging to each other with a deathly grasp.

A wild shriek arose upon the startled air as they left the edge of the precipice, and Nat's heart stood still at the sound.

He had heard more than that fearful cry, for blended with it had come an appeal for help in the well-known tones of Frank Trafton.

Nat turned and saw the lad struggling fiercely with the

traitor Lewis, his slight frame being no match for the stalwart shipkeeper.

Nat saw the lad fall upon the sharp rocks, and then beheld Lewis detach a heavy mass from the rough boulders near him, and raise it threateningly over Frank's head.

Though the distance was considerable, Nat cleared it in an incredibly short space of time, and dealt the monster a ringing blow upon the head just as he was about to throw the heavy mass upon the unconscious boy at his feet.

"Coward!" cried Nat, enraged, "leave this place at once, or I will not answer for your safety!"

The stone fell from the man's hands, but not upon Frank, and Lewis, stunned and dazed by the blow, staggered from the spot as if drunk.

"Get out of here, you miserable cur!" cried Naat, and with another kick he sent the scoundrel reeling down the steep path.

Then he turned to Frank, the boy's pale face and bated breath giving him the greatest alarm.

With frenzied excitement he loosened the lad's coat in order to expose his throat and allow a chance for the blood to circulate.

As he pulled open the boy's inner jacket and unloosed the collar of his shirt he suddenly uttered a cry of surprise.

The boy Frank was no boy at all, but a woman!

At that instant Frank opened his eyes, and, seeing Nat, blushed like a rose.

"Fear not, Frank," said Nat, hastily, "your secret is safe."

"You have saved my life," said the other, turning to Nat and taking his hand. "You will still call me Frank?"

"Yes."

"And not ask for my story yet?"

"Not until you wish it."

"When he I called father is no more, I will tell you all, and reveal another secret which I have tried, and almost in vain, to conceal."

"The man is already beyond our reach."

"Dead?"

"Yes." Then turning to the others:

"Let us haste away from this place," said Nat, "for my mind is not at ease, and I know not what may happen. We can have no nautical instruments but one compass, and only one frail craft to bear us four away."

"But the Pole?" said Job, gravely.

So they once more went aboard the boats and sailed away.

"The Pole is there," said the young hero, "and I am confident that I have found it, but, alas! I have no proof to offer in support of my belief, and should I declare to the world that I have accomplished this hitherto impossible feat, I should only receive the world's derision for my trouble. Farewell, bright dream; in the future you may return, but now, farewell."

Through storm and tempest, sunshine and calm, the wanderers were wafted over the ocean, till, one day, when their provisions and water had given out for many hours, their sails torn and soiled, their boat badly leaking and threatening to sink, they knew not how soon, the ever jovial Chucks espied a sail.

A Norwegian whaleman was out in his boats chasing whales, and the returned explorers were soon taken aboard the Bjorn and cared for with all the tenderness that sailors know how to show to distressed mariners.

* * * * *

Nat and Frank stood upon the deck of an American vessel, returning home to the beloved land they had not seen in one whole year and more, and which at one time they thought they would never behold again.

Job and Chucks are upon the same vessel, but they are

forward among the sailors at the present moment, Chucks telling yarns and Job gravely listening.

Thanks to Frank's foresight in having them all provide themselves with money before leaving the Adventurer for the last time, they were by no means penniless when they at last set foot once more upon shore, the Bjorn returning at the end of September.

Nat found an American vessel about to sail for Boston, and finding the captain, he told his story, and offered to pay for his passage home.

This the honest-hearted tar would not consent to, and Nat and Frank were once more installed in the cabin, the captain taking to them at once, and being intensely interested in the recital of their adventures.

"Nat," says Frank, this beautiful evening, "I promised once to tell you several things which seemed inexplicable to you."

"Yes, my dear, you did; but you need be in no hurry about it."

"First about the Esquimaux bringing me back after they had carried me away."

"That did puzzle me, I must own, for these fellows are not in the habit of doing things in that way."

"The secret is just this: When they discovered that I was a woman, for I soon made them understand it, they ceased their cruel treatment of me, and behaved as if I were a goddess."

"They could not do enough to please me, for they said that there had been a white woman once who had been good to them, and they could never forget her."

"For her sake they swore to do everything in their power to make me happy, and they treated me with unusual kindness; though they do have queer ways of showing it."

Here Frank laughed such a soft and silvery laugh that Nat was forced to join in; it was infectious. He remembered the awkward ways of certain goodnatured Inuits he had seen, and he was obliged to laugh at the remembrance.

"I had a fancy that this white woman was Lady Franklin," resumed Frank; "though, of course, I had no means of ascertaining. When I told them that I wanted to be taken back to the ship they consented, and that's how I came back. I could not tell you then, for I had my secret to keep."

"Cartwright must have been as careful as you, for he never gave me the slightest inkling of the case."

"Do you know why? For years I have been a boy to all the world. There were two of us children, I and my brother Frank, but Frank died some five or six years ago."

"Cartwright gave out that it was Charlotte that died, and as we were exactly alike, no one knew me from Frank, particularly when I assumed the habit of a youth."

"We moved to a distance, and I was called Frank, and was supposed to be a boy by everyone. This is the reason: Frank was to receive a legacy of an enormous amount upon the death of some relative of Cartwright's. I was Frank, consequently I would have the money."

"I was forced to keep up the delusion, though it was hateful to me, and, as I tell you, for years I have been unsexed. This wicked man so filled my mind with hatred of you and yours that I was forced to consent to his plan of being avenged upon you."

"I was brought upon the Arctic Fox as cabin-boy, which you know, and was bade to watch my opportunity to slay you in some way, and thus clear off an old score."

"I did not then know of the extent of the man's wickedness, nor the depth of his deceit, and in my anguish and fear of him I promised to do whatever he wished, believing you to be a monster and undeserving of pity."

"Love for you conquered the fear I had for him, and at

last I came to regard him with horror. He would not hesitate to take life if he could advance his interests thereby, and I knew that he and Jones had a plan to either kill or abandon the captain, and seize the vessel."

"You were to be sacrificed at the same time, and then we were to return and live in ease. I so hated the wretch that I avoided him as much as possible, and when I got into your boat upon that last day of our stay on the Arctic Fox, it was so I might not be with him."

"I knew when Tom told us of the abandonment that he and Jones had had it planned beforehand, for I saw them whispering together just before we lowered, but did not think much of it at the time."

"You could not know then how thankful I was that I had been with you in the boat, although our lives were in such peril, for I loved you with all my heart, and yet could not tell it."

"I feared that you would think me bold and reproach me for being the child of that man, but little by little I knew that you were too noble for that. And yet I was obliged to keep my secret."

"While you believed that I was a lad, I could be near you at all times, assist you with what strength I had, and be a beloved companion to you. Once you knew me to be what I was, I feared that you would be embarrassed—would think me a burden; perhaps not love me as you loved the 'dear little Frank,' and I still kept my secret."

"You know now that you were mistaken, don't you?"

For answer she turns her face to his and gives him a look full of tenderness and devotion, such as any man might feel proud to have bestowed upon him.

* * * * *

The story of North Pole Nat is finished, and but a few lines remain to be written.

Whether the silent sentinel of the Adventurer still keeps his ceaseless vigil no one knows, and very likely no one will ever know, for Nat has given up his ambition of finding the northern limit of this, our globe.

Established in a good business, with a loving wife and a group of merry children to make home pleasant, he cares no more to roam over the world, but remains just where he settled after his return, in busy New York.

Job is a harpooner still, and will be until he dies, but he has had all of the Arctic Ocean he wants, and always ships upon vessels bound for the Pacific or Indian Oceans.

Mr. and Mrs. Chucks are as happy as two such jolly souls can be expected, the partner of the rosy fellow's joys being as merry as himself.

Chucks is getting too rotund to go as a sailor now, and he has settled down as a ship chandler, at which business he makes a tidy little income, which he says is for his only son, a fine, manly fellow withal, though somewhat inclined to obesity, whom he has named Nathan Frank Chucks—Nat's wife is still called Frank, and nothing else—after his oldtime messmate and constant friend, North Pole Nat.

THE END.

Read "THIRTEEN WHITE RAVENS; or, THE GHOSTLY RIDERS OF THE FOREST," by Allyn Draper, which will be the next number (485) of "Pluck and Luck."

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THINGS OF INTEREST.

The costliest picture in the world is one painted by Raphael in 1506 and now owned by the Duke of Marlborough. It is known as the Blenheim Madonna, from the name of the Duke's palace. The picture is eight feet high, and represents the Madonna and Child on a throne, with the figures of St. John the Baptist and St. Nicholas of Bari on the left and right, respectively. It owes its enormous valuation, more than \$350,000, to the fact that it is one of the best-preserved specimens of Raphael's work in existence.

Boomerangs designed by Sir Ralph Payne-Gallwey are being purchased just now for use at society house-parties. Ladies are taking to the sport, which promises to become fashionable. Skill and dexterity, more than strength, are required for proficiency in boomerang throwing—hence it is a recreation just as well suited to ladies as tennis or archery. The boomerang springs from the thrower's hand with a hiss of fury, leaps high into the air, and then describes gracefully circle after circle until it returns to the thrower's feet. The exercise is a splendid one, as it brings into play nearly all the muscles of the arms, legs and body.

The emerald is mentioned by St. John in his Apocalypse. An emerald of inestimable value ornamented the bezel of the ring of Polycrates, King of Samos. That monarch, having been, all his life, favored by fortune, determined to put his luck to a severe test. He threw the ring into the sea. The next day he went fishing. The record of that day's sport still remains unbroken. His Majesty caught a fine fish, and in the inside of the fish he found his ring. That happened in the year 230 of the foundation of Rome, and the ring, considered as a talisman, was placed among the royal treasures of the Temple of Concord.

If the fears of librarians are realized, the Congressional Library has thousands of newspapers which are destined to comparatively short lives. These are publications for which paper made of wood-pulp is used. The old paper made of linen rags is practically indestructible. But with paper made of wood-pulp, the case is different. The files of newspapers at the library that are but fifteen or twenty years old show the effect of time in the condition of the paper. Readers who consult these newspapers are painfully aware how careful they have to be, in order not to tear the pages as they turn them. Light and air are the destructive elements that are playing havoc with the wood-pulp sheets. It is believed, by men who have made this matter a specialty, that within fifty years the newspaper files of the present day can not be accessible to the public without great restrictions, on account of their fragile condition.

The continent now named America has gone, at one time

or another, by a great many names. The notion that Columbus had of finding a westward passage to India by way of the Atlantic is recorded in the names New India and India Occidental, found upon old maps, as indicating the land discovered by Columbus. America Mexicana was an old name of North America, as America Peruviana was of South America. Then Brazil was, for a time, the name applied to the Southern Continent. Finally, the origin of the name America has been disputed, though the weight of testimony leaves practically no doubt that it comes from the Christian name, Amerigo Vespucci. Some early authorities, however, gravely contend that the name came from the Peruvian word, Amaru, meaning the sacred symbol of the cross, made of a serpent and a stick, and the suffix ca, meaning country. Thus derived, America means the land of the holy animal.

The nightingale favors some districts and shuns others. Scotland it does not visit; but a century ago a patriotic Scotsman tried to establish the nightingale in that country. He commissioned a London dealer to purchase nightingales' eggs, one shilling each being given for them. These were well packed in wool and sent to Scotland by mail-coach. A number of men had previously been engaged to take special care of all robin-redbreasts' nests in places where the eggs could be hatched in safety. The robins' eggs were removed and replaced by those of the nightingale which were hatched and reared by their foster-mothers. When full-fledged, the young nightingales seemed perfectly at home near the places where they first saw the light; and in September the usual period of migration, they departed. But the nightingales never returned to Scotland. It has been suggested that it was not the climate they objected to, so much as the difficulty of acquiring the accent.

OUR COMIC COLUMN.

"I understand that Frailman has come to the conclusion to contest his wife's will." "Well, what is there courageous about that? She's dead, isn't she?"

"The singer has made great strides in the profession, hasn't she?" "Yes, indeed. Formerly, when she received an encore, she sang; now she usually smiles."

"This necktie," said the polite salesman, "speaks for itself." "Speaks for itself?" repeated the customer, as he took in the loudness of the design. "I say that it positively yells."

"Mamma," the little girl said, as the steamer excursionists stepped ashore at Joppa, "this is the Holy Land, isn't it?" "Yes, dear." "These sailors don't know it. Just hear them swear."

"When he saw the enemy coming he turned and ran. I call that cowardice." "Not at all. He remembered that the earth is round, and he intended to run around and attack the enemy in the rear."

Mother (returning suddenly).—Gracious, children, what have you been doing? Why, the room looks like a hurricane had struck it, and Willie looks like he had been through a threshing machine! Tommy—Please, mamma, we have been playing Russian Douma, and Willie was the Czar.

An inspector inspecting a Canadian school was much worried by the noise of the scholars in the next room. At last, unable to bear it any longer, he opened the door and burst in upon the class. Seeing one boy rather taller than the others talking a great deal, he caught him by the collar, carried him to his own room, and banged him into a chair, saying: "Now sit there and be quiet." A quarter of an hour later a small head appeared around the door, and a meek little voice said: "Please, sir, you've got our teacher."

THE SORCERER'S WARNING

OR,

THE DREAM OF HAROLD THE BOLD.

By ALEXANDER ARMSTRONG.

In all the Norse country there was no fairer maiden than Brunhilda, the daughter of the famed warrior Oswald the Red, whose mighty castle frowned upon the wide sea from a high cliff overlooking the deep fiord of Nordenskald.

Brunhilda had suitors many, who came to her father's hall to sue for her favors.

But she remained heart whole and fancy free until she met Harold, surnamed the Bold. Handsome and brave and noble Harold won her fresh young heart.

But Oswald the Red was a stern old parent, and forbade Brunhilda bestowing her favors upon Harold.

It was the old, old story. Oswald had in his mind's eye a suitor for his daughter whom he fancied better than Harold. This was his trusty lieutenant Osdrick.

But Brunhilda had no love for Osdrick. Her heart pined for Harold, and though it would be to leave her father and her home she told the brave young warrior that she would fly with him if he desired.

But this elopment, though planned, was not easily carried out. Oswald had forbidden Harold the castle, and now, suspecting the lovers' plans, placed a watch upon Brunhilda.

In vain Harold sought for intercourse with his true love. This was denied them.

Angered, he was resolved with true Norse spirit to win his bride, if not by pacific means, by arms, and at once gathered together some kindred spirits and concocted a plot to raise an insurrection and overthrow the authority of Oswald the Red.

But Oswald had a strong force in his employ, seven hundred retainers, hard fighting men, and his position in his castle was almost invincible.

All that Harold could muster whom he knew he could depend upon was half that number. Yet, undaunted, he was about to try the scheme when a new and better plan seemed to present itself.

There was to be a festival near the castle and all the people of the region about were to participate. It was the occasion of a religious anniversary and the chief sages and harpists of the country would be present.

Harold knew that Brunhilda would be present, so he planned to accomplish by strategy what it had been his intention to accomplish by force.

His plan was to disguise himself as a goat-herd and participate in the dance. At a favorable moment he would make himself known to Brunhilda and they would contrive to escape in some manner.

Thus attired, he set out for the scene of festivity when the day came. But before he reached the spot he met a strange old man with bald head and loose, flowing robes. To Harold's surprise he accosted him.

"Where goest thou now, Harold of the bold heart. Ah, brave though thou art, thy time will come as other men."

"What sayest thou, sorcerer?" cried the young chieftain in surprise. "Is my disguise so easily penetrated then? I had better turn back."

"Nay, only to my eyes," replied the aged magician quickly. "Go thy way, thou art safe. But great is thy future."

"Stay!" cried Harold, tossing some gold pieces at the old man's feet. "Thou shalt give me assurance of that before I go further. Read my palm and tell me the truth."

He extended his hand. The soothsayer bent over it a brief second, scanning lines eagerly. He passed his hand across his brow.

"Thou wilt win in love and in war," he replied, briefly. "Ask no more. Go to her whose heart yearns for ye."

"Praises on the good sorcerer," cried Harold, with light heart. "I am now sure of happiness."

He went on his way and soon came to the festival. None knew him, and he entered into the dance. As he had hoped, he met and made himself known to Brunhilda.

But Osdrick was there, and with eyes of jealousy watched the pair. He knew not who the daring goatherd was, but angered at his presumption in dancing with the Viking's daughter, he determined to administer reproof.

Accordingly, unable to restrain his jealous rage, he strode forward and confronted Harold.

"Ha, thou scurvy knave!" he roared, fetching the pseudo goatherd a vigorous cuff over the ear. "Take that for thy presumption. Begone, and seek the company of thy kind. Thou art not fit for this."

Had it been really an humble goatherd whom Osdrick had struck the question would have been settled at once; but it was instead a nobleman of the Norse race, well mated for his blood and skill.

In that instant beneath the indignity Harold promptly forgot his identity. With the bearing of a king he bore up and returned Osdrick's blow in kind.

"Thou'lt dare strike me!" he roared. "Ha! I am worthy of thy mettle, as thou shalt soon find. Retract thy outrage, or by the soul of Thor I will kill thee!"

A mortal combat would have then and there taken place but for the interposition of the men-at-arms of Oswald. Harold, now revealed, was compelled to abandon his scheme of elopement with Brunhilda and retired discomfited and much disappointed.

But the lion within him was now aroused. He was determined at any cost to bring an army that should defeat Osdrick and win his bride for him. At once he sent the note of war through the country. From far and near brave men flocked to his standard. Harold was popular, and the Norse warriors liked to fight with him.

But Oswald the Red, in his impregnable castle, only laughed at these preparations. He sent insulting messages to Harold and harassed him in every way that he could.

But the young chieftain was patient and satisfied to bide his time. One thing occurred, however, to disturb the mind of Oswald.

One morning an old man with head shorn of hair and dressed in long, flowing robes, applied at the castle. It chanced that Sir Oswald was just riding forth. At sight of the sorcerer he threw him a hand full of gold and cried:

"Well, soothsayer, what hast to say of my future? Does it not augur well?"

The sorcerer flung the gold back again, and, raising to his fullest height, he lifted one hand up and cried:

"I see thy dark future, Oswald, of the red beard! This is my warning. Heed it well. Thou dost stand in the light of thy own happiness. A viper is nourished in thy bosom, but an enemy shall help thee to conquer an enemy. Be prepared! Heed the warning!"

Before Oswald could recover from his surprise and question the sorcerer further, he had slipped down the cliff wall and was gone.

He was too stern and proud to betray his real emotions, but the sorcerer's warning rankled deep in his breast.

"There is a viper in my bosom," he repeated. "And an enemy shall help me to conquer an enemy. Strange! If there be truth in the sorcerer's words I must prepare for trouble. Yet 'tis very strange."

From that moment a heavy weight was upon his mind. In vain he cogitated over the sorcerer's warning. He could not fathom it, neither could he set it lightly aside.

In the meanwhile Harold the Bold had been forming his band preparatory to an attack upon the castle. He sent a message to Oswald in which he declared his love for Brunhilda and also made a proposition to waive the attack and settle the question as to who should have Brunhilda by meeting Osdrick in single combat. Whichever should be victorious should claim the hand of the Norse beauty.

At first Oswald thought well of the proposition, but Osdrick feigned ridicule and Oswald sent word back that he would himself meet Harold in combat.

Before an answer could come back, a strange and startling thing happened to prevent it.

Harold had a strange dream which puzzled him sorely.

In his dream he seemed to be in battle. The foe pressed him hard upon all sides. For a time it seemed as if he must die, but suddenly there appeared over his head a white dove. Tremendous strength came to him and he beat his foes back.

The scene now changed. He saw a man sleeping on a couch. He recalled not the features save that they were noble and fair. A viper, malign and poisonous, crept over the sleeper's shoulder and seemed about to thrust his fangs into the victim's face.

Harold's impulse was to crush the viper. For a time he seemed powerless, then strength came to him and he hurled the reptile aside. This act awoke him, and he was bathed in cold and clammy perspiration.

So strange and weird was the vision that Harold believed it held some import and was resolved to know what it was.

So at night with a companion, one of his men-at-arms, he descended the cliff and visited the sorcerer's cave. Calling loudly several times, the sorcerer, with an oil-lamp in his hand, appeared in the entrance of the cavern. Shading the light with one hand, he said:

"What wants Harold the Bold with me?"

"Good sorcerer," said the young warrior, eagerly, "I have had a strange dream and have come to thee for interpretation."

"Enter, good sir," said the sorcerer, leading the way into his cavern retreat.

Harold detailed his dream vividly. The sorcerer listened, then closing his eyes, said:

"I can see now the wall of the future. Thy dream is easily construed, Harold. Thou wilt be pressed by thy foes. The white dove is victory. Thou shalt win. The viper is the foe of Oswald the Red. He it is whom Oswald has chosen as husband for his daughter."

"Osdrick!" gasped Harold.

"Yes, his fangs are even now hovering above Oswald's head. He is a traitor. But have good heart, brave Harold. Thou shalt be given the power to crush the viper."

"But in what manner?" began Harold.

"Enough," said the sorcerer, waving him from the cavern. "Leave that to Thor, the god of war. But prepare for battle, not against Oswald, but a greater foe."

Harold left the sorcerer's cave in a bewildered state of mind.

"A greater enemy!" he muttered. "What can it mean?"

The break of day brought explanation. In the fjord rode six ships, the fleet of Eric the Dauntless, who had come to do battle with Oswald and destroy his castle.

For years a bitter feud had been waged between these two Vikings, and now Eric had come with a force which was adjudged sufficient to easily take the castle by storm. Learning that Harold was also arrayed against Oswald, Eric sent messengers to treat with him.

But Harold evaded this and kept spies out constantly watching the action of the newcomers. He remembered the sorcerer's warning quite well.

The result was that he learned of a clandestine meeting between Eric and Osdrick on the shore below the castle. The appearance of Eric on these shores was all due to the machinations of the treacherous Osdrick.

The plan was for Osdrick to admit the men of Eric's band by a side gate and path up the cliff. They would thus take the garrison by surprise. Oswald would be killed, and Osdrick would be given the castle and Brunhilda, while Eric would despoil the country about. It was a traitor's game and excited the anger and contempt of Harold. He forgot his anger against Oswald and determined to baffle the treacherous Osdrick at any cost.

Accordingly he cleverly disguised himself, and upon the night set for the surprising of the castle he applied at the

gates, and claiming to be a spy, was admitted to Oswald's presence.

Oswald in full armor was pacing the floor of a chamber overlooking the sea. Harold in his disguise bowed before him and at once in the character of a spy disclosed the treacherous intentions of Osdrick.

Oswald was astonished.

"Impossible!" he cried. "Osdrick is true to me. I will not believe it."

"Wait," said Harold, shrewdly. "At the turn of the moon to-night he will open the postern gate on the cliff and let Eric and his men in. Secretly have your men prepared, and if it comes not true, then I offer you my head as forfeit."

"I will do it!" cried Oswald.

Previous to this Harold had caused his own men to seek cover beyond the cliff, armed and in readiness to close upon the rear of Eric's men. Oswald with Harold by his side kept watch, and sure enough saw Osdrick unlatch the iron gate. Gazing down from a tower Oswald saw the men of Eric creeping up to enter the castle.

At this moment Osdrick came into the court stealthily. With all the anger of his fiery nature Oswald confronted him, crying:

"Traitor! I know your base actions! I have watched you! No one can play false to Oswald and live!"

The traitor's face turned livid. But his sword leaped forth, and he cried:

"It is false!"

"It is true!" cried Harold the Bold, throwing off his disguise. "I saw you do it!"

"Who are you?" hissed Osdrick.

"I am Harold the Bold."

"What, another enemy?" gasped Oswald.

"No; your friend," cried the young Norse warrior, with fervor. "But for me you would have this night been murdered in bed. Leave me to deal with this hound. Sound the charge, and victory shall be ours, or Harold the Bold gives up his life this night."

The swords of Harold and Osdrick crossed. It was a swift, terrific combat, but the sorcerer's prediction was true. Victory sided with noble Harold, and he soon leaped over his foe's dead body to marshal the garrison and repulse the forces of Eric the Dauntless.

The battle which followed was terrific. But Harold's forces closed in below, and Eric was killed, the greater part of his band taken prisoners and the ships seized. It was a mighty victory for Harold and Oswald.

Right after the victory, and while the minstrels were singing his praises as a true hero, Harold went to the sorcerer's cave to show him gratitude for his kindly predictions. But on his couch the magician lay dead. But the young Norse warrior grieved as for a dear friend, and saw the sorcerer placed in a fitting grave and honor done to his memory.

Oswald was not ungrateful to Harold the Bold. Brunhilda became the Norse hero's bride, and prosperity long rewarded the kindred of Harold and Oswald.

Coney Island would not be complete without a few new thrills each season. Here is a brand-new one which will undoubtedly be seen here next year if completed too late for the present season. It is called the Avernus wheel, and its inventor claims that it combines all the sensations of the switchback, the roller-coaster and the loop-the-loop, all in one, with many additional and exhilarating features. The machine carries two large, irregular wheels on the same axle, and on each wheel runs a car capable of seating twenty persons. A long moveable arm holds the cars on the track while the irregular wheels are revolving. The speed can be regulated, and the most surprising varieties of motion are obtained. It is a new sensation for Coney.

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